The Women of the Old & New Testament

G. Staal. W. H. Egleton

The Virgin and Infant Saviour

New-York. D. Appleton & Cº 200, Broadway.

WOMEN

OF THE

OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT:

A SERIES OF PORTRAITS.

With Characteristic Descriptions,

BY SEVERAL AMERICAN CLERGYMEN.

EDITED BY

WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

EIGHTEEN ORIGINAL DESIGNS ENGRAVED EXPRESSLY FOR THIS WORK.

SECOND EDITION.

NEW-YORK:
D. APPLETON & COMPANY, 200 BROADWAY.
PHILADELPHIA:
GEO. S. APPLETON, 164 CHESNUT-STREET.
M.DCCC.LI.

BS575
.S55
1851

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1849, by
D. APPLETON & COMPANY,
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Southern District of New-York.

Gift
Miss Alice W. Craighead
July 23, 1959

TO THOSE

WHO APPRECIATE THE BEAUTIES

OF ART

OR RELISH THE GRACES OF LITERATURE;

WHO ADMIRE THE VIRTUOUS CHARMS

OF WOMAN

OR ARE WILLING TO BE ADMONISHED BY HER FRAILTIES AND DEFECTS;

WHO VALUE A KNOWLEDGE OF THE

HUMAN HEART

OR REVERENCE THE TEACHINGS OF HEAVENLY WISDOM;

This Work

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

The publishers of the "Women of the Bible," in consideration of the uncommon favor with which that work has been regarded by those most competent to estimate its merits, have been induced to offer to the public another of the same general character. As the former work was necessarily a mere selection from the female characters of Scripture, there were of course many which it did not embrace, of equal interest with those which it did; so that it was not a mere matter of gleaning, to gather the materials for a second work of the same kind. There is this difference, however, between the present work and the one which preceded it,—that whereas the former was confined to the characters which are supplied by the Old Testament, the latter has taken the larger number of its subjects from the New.

The reader will at once perceive that these sketches are something more than a mere outline of the history of the individuals to whom

they relate. They aim to bring out those great lessons of truth and wisdom which, in some form or other, lie embodied in all these characters, and which are adapted to form the mind to virtue, usefulness, and immortal felicity.

The work, it is hoped, may prove a welcome offering as well to the cause of taste and literature as to that of virtue and piety. The publishers have put in requisition the talents of some of the best artists of the day, for the engraved illustrations; and the Editor has been allowed to avail himself of the aid of some of the most distinguished of his clerical brethren, in respect to the letterpress of the work. He would gladly have included writers from some other Christian communions; but the several applications which he made, owing to the numerous engagements of the persons applied to, were unsuccessful.

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THE VIRGIN MARY.

BY W. INGRAHAM KIP, D. D.

How beautifully does every truth connected with Christianity harmonize with its whole history and object! A mission of love and peace and purity, it presents to the mind nothing but images calculated to advance the great moral end it has in view. Each minute circumstance, from the first annunciation of its Advent to the last expiring prayer of its Founder on the Cross, is something intended to sink into the hearts of men — to appeal to their affections — and thus mould them into that gentleness and purity which are its own characteristics.

So is it with the fact, that Christ was "born of a pure Virgin." It was entirely in accordance with the spirit of the faith He came to publish, uniting together female purity and maternal tenderness, and, as it were, consecrating both by their connection with Him who is "the Everlasting Son of the Father." We look to the mythology of the Greeks, like the character of its worshippers, imaginative and sensual, and we see how strictly it harmonizes with every revelation made them of the crowded hierarchy of Olympus. And so too the warlike Romans were restrained by no lessons of gentleness in the faith they had inherited. The fable which spake of their origin

from the nursling of the wolf, found an echo in the hearts of those who prided themselves on being the tramplers-down of all other nations, and the flight of whose eagles nothing could withstand. But Christianity was to come gentle in spirit, and imbuing the minds of men with peaceful images. Such, therefore, were the characteristics which marked the Advent of its Author, and when in after ages His followers first raised in the Church at Milan, that lofty anthem which through all succeeding centuries was to be the Church's triumphant song, they failed not to enumerate among their ascriptions of praise—"When Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man, Thou didst humble Thyself to be born of a Virgin."

It is only occasionally that we catch, as it were, glimpses of the Virgin Mary in the history of her Son. The royal line of David had sunk into insignificance, when in a period of intense expectation, while all men rested in the hope that the Messiah was at hand, because the very crisis of their political state had come, an angel appeared unto Mary, and announced that she had been selected as the favored Mother of the Lord. Afterwards, her cousin Elizabeth, "filled with the Holy Ghost," confirmed the same glorious promise. Then the Virgin burst forth into the *Magnificat*—that song of thanksgiving in which she poured out the overflowing gratitude of her soul.

"My soul doth magnify the Lord:
And my spirit hath exulted in God my Saviour;
For He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden:
For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed;
For, great things hath the Powerful One done for me;
And holy is His name:
And His mercy is from generation to generation,
Over them who fear him:
He hath wrought strength with His arm;

He hath scattered the supercilious in the imagination of their heart:
He hath cast down potentates from their thrones;
And hath exalted the lowly:
The hungry He hath filled with good things;
And the rich He hath sent empty away:
He hath succored Israel His servant;
In remembrance of mercy,
(As He promised our Fathers)
To Abraham, and to his seed for ever." *

It has been remarked, that this is clearly the song of a Jewish woman, familiar with the images of the Old Testament, and sharing in the prejudices of her countrymen and their earthly hopes with regard to the Messiah. The words indeed are susceptible of a spiritual meaning, and apply to that mysterious redemption which was afterwards to be wrought out; yet the rejoicing over the scattering of the proud — the degradation of the mighty — the disappointment of the rich — and the exaltation of the humble — may well echo the triumphant feelings of one of the forgotten House of David, who felt that at last the day of deliverance was at hand, and in the hour of Judea's greatest need, her proud oppressors were to be stricken to the dust.

Then came the journey to Bethlehem, and the birth of the Son of God in the lowliness of a stable; while without, at midnight, angel wings swept the illumined air, and shepherds amid their peaceful pastures heard that song of the heavenly hosts to which the dwellers in the stately palaces of Jerusalem were not permitted to listen. None from the neighboring city sought the lowly dwelling of the Virgin, but wise men from the East bowed in reverence before

* Bishop Jebb's Version, Sacred Literature, p. 392.

her, and presented gifts with which the inhabitants of the East were accustomed to approach the presence of a sovereign. Wonders seemed to crowd about her steps. The aged Simeon and Anna met her in the temple at the Purification, and while they spake of the future glory of the Child, prophesied also of the sorrow which should be the Mother's lot, when "a sword should pierce through her own soul also." But "against the Holy Child Jesus, Herod and the Gentiles were gathered together," and they were obliged to seek safety in Egypt, remaining exiles from their own land until the threatening danger was overpast by the death of their oppressor.

Twelve years pass away, during which we have no mention of the Virgin or her Son. At length they come up to the Feast in Jerusalem, and the Child is found talking with the doctors in the temple. Yet even thus early, in reply to His Mother's mention of the anxiety of His father and herself for His safety, He takes occasion to remind her of His origin—to disclaim the paternity of Joseph—and to assert His filial relationship to God. Then for eighteen years longer the sacred narrative is to us a blank. The Holy Family were in retirement at Nazareth, and Jesus was subject to His parents. But Mary "kept all these sayings in her heart," and how solemn must have been her musings during these long years, when she remembered all that God had promised, and yet beheld her Son living in the obscurity of His humble home! How must there have struggled in her breast, the natural yearnings of a Mother's love and the awful reverence she felt for Him whom she knew to be more than man!

"Day
Followed on day, like any childhood's passing;
And silently sat Mary at her wheel,
And watched the boy-Messiah as she spun;
And as a human child unto its mother

Subject the while, He did her low voice bidding—
Or gently came to lean upon her knee,
And ask her of the thoughts that in Him stirred
Dimly as yet—or with affection sweet,
Tell, murm'ring of his weariness—and then,
All tearful-hearted, (as a human mother
Unutterably fond, while touched with awe,)
She paused, or with tremulous hand spun on—
The blessings that her lips instinctive gave
Asked of Him with an instant thought again."*

At last came the time of "His showing unto Israel," but He entered on his work unrecognized and unknown. The remembrance of the wonders which waited on His birth had died away from the minds of men—the magi had been forgotten—and the aged Simeon and Anna had probably long since departed to the world of spirits. We may imagine with what anxious care the Virgin followed His steps in his painful pilgrimages through Judea, and rejoiced over each miracle which gave confirmation to her long cherished hopes. Yet in the only two instances in which she appears in the narrative, it is not in the character with which later ages invested her—one all-powerful with her Son. At the marriage at Cana, the words He utters sound almost like a reproof; and when again on another occasion it is announced—"Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee"—He refuses to cease from His labor, but declares that He is bound to the great spiritual family which called Him Lord, by closer ties than to those whom the world recognized as his kindred. When the claims of earthly relationship are pressed upon Him, He seems to retire at once into the unapproachable Majesty of his own Divinity.

* Willis.

There was one scene more in which we see the Mother of our Lord. It was at the Crucifixion, when in the midst of her bitter agony, she must have remembered the prediction which long years before Simeon had uttered. And beautifully is this brought forward in one of the ancient forms of the Church of England—"the Goolden Letanye of the Lyf and Passion of our Lorde Jesu Criste"—where, in tracing the pilgrimage of our Saviour, in its simple yet touching expressions of sympathy with His divine sufferings, it thus introduces His Mother at the Cross:—

"By the grete compassion of thi hert, that thou haddist wen bering the Crosse thou mettist thi blyssid modir making most sorowe and lamentacion—

"By thi hevy chere and the goyng up of hey mounte of Calvarie where thou wert crucified—

"Bi that cold sittyng that thou sattyst pitiously, full of wondis in the colde wendes, so abydynge until thi Crosse was redy—

"For the lyftyng up of thi most holy body on the Crosse, and the sore braysyng thereof, that gave to all partyes of thi body an uncredible peyn—

"For the sworde of sorowe that whent throught the soule of thi blysid modir, and her grete compassion and teeres that standyng by the Crosse lamentably she shede—

"*Inclyne most swete Jesu to us.*"

But the last expressions heard from the lips of her expiring Son revealed His love for her who had been His earthly Mother. As she stood at the foot of the Cross, He commended her to the care of His beloved disciple, "and from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." And there she dwelt, an object of reverence and love to the early Christian Church, until—as Eusebius tells us—in the forty-eighth year from the birth of Christ, she departed to be once more with Him to whom she had possessed so mysterious a relationship on earth. And this is all that we can gather from the records of Scripture or of History with regard to her

"Who so above
All mothers shone,
The mother of
The Blessed One."

The Apostles, one by one, were released from their warfare and entered into their reward—the last of those who had seen their Lord in the flesh, sank to the tomb—ages passed by, and there came a disastrous change over the spirit of the Church. The feeble wing of devotion, which could not rise to the throne of Divinity, sought to connect itself with lower and more earthly objects. Prayers began to be addressed to those whose names were written in the early annals of the Church, for sanctity or Christian heroism—apostles and confessors—and the members of that glorious company whom the Church commemorates as "the noble army of the martyrs." It is not wonderful therefore that the Virgin Mother of the Lord appeared to have peculiar claims to reverence, and soon many a prayer and hymn were addressed to her as Intercessor with her Son. The fitting reverence for her who was "blessed among women" insensibly deepened into adoration. It was a doctrine which suited the fervent temperament of the East where first it originated, but there was none to which every where the heart seemed so to cling or which it embraced with such passionate affection. Of the Son they could not think but in connection with "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity"—there were often images of terror and sternness suggested by the view—but with the Virgin it was not so. All was gentleness and love when they turned to the Mother and Child, and there they found an object for those more earthly affections which mingled with their worship. The doctrine therefore became enshrined in the hearts of multitudes, and was developed in many a visible form in the rites and customs of the Church. It was a feeling, the workings of which

a Christian poet of our own day has beautifully portrayed, when he says—

> "Mother! whose virgin bosom was uncrost
> With the least shade of thought to sin allied;
> Woman above all women glorified,
> Our tainted nature's solitary boast;
> Purer than foam on central ocean tost;
> Brighter than Eastern skies at daybreak strewn
> With fancied roses, than the unblemished moon
> Before her wane begins on heaven's blue coast;
> Thy Image falls to Earth. Yet some, I ween,
> Not unforgiven the suppliant knee might bend,
> As to a visible Power, in which did blend,
> All that was mixed and reconciled in Thee
> Of mother's love with maiden purity,
> Of high with low, celestial with terrene!"*

The language of the early fathers often lent its influence to strengthen this feeling, and later generations have appealed to it in support of their views. And yet, it is often only the glowing words of Orientals, who, writing beneath a warmer sun than ours, seem unrestricted by the cold rules of ordinary logic, but show every where, in the impassioned vehemence of their expressions, the climate of those burning regions working in their language. They wrote, too, before heresy had been developed, and therefore assumed a freedom of expression from which in this age we should shrink. So it was with the ardent words of Irenæus, when he draws his parallel between Eve and the Virgin.† And yet, the primary object of much which he wrote on this subject was not to magnify Mary, but, in opposition to the

* Wordsworth's Eccles. Sonnets, xxi.

† Iren. iii. 33, v. 19.

Gnostic heretics, to prove the reality of the Incarnation. On the other hand, some of the earlier fathers use language which in the thirteenth century would have shocked the followers of St. Francis or St. Dominic. Thus, when Tertullian compares the Virgin with Martha and Mary, the picture is far most favorable to the latter, and he even insinuates that the Mother of our Lord shared in the incredulity of the rest of her family.* And even when most strongly stated, there will be found to be a wide difference between Patristic language and that employed by Romish writers. Thus, in the former, the benefits are said to be derived through her, because of her, according to the flesh, Christ was born; in the latter, they are attributed to her by virtue of the dignity *since* bestowed on her. In the fathers, blessings are spoken of as coming from her indirectly; in later writers, directly. In the fathers, from her when on earth; in Romish writers, from her in Heaven. In the early writers, from the Nativity of our Lord; in those of the Church of Rome, from *her* sovereignty, rule, intercession, command, with which, for her merits, she is alleged to be invested.† Thus—in the language of Faber—they spoke of the Virgin of the Gospels, with their eyes fixed upon the mystery of the Incarnation; whereas Roman divines speak of the Virgin in Heaven, with their eyes fixed upon her assumption thither.

We can even trace the gradual development of this feeling in the progress of ancient art. For four centuries no delineations of the Virgin are found on the Christian monuments, nor is it until the sixth century that they become common. We discover none on the tombs of the early believers in the Catacombs at Rome; nor among the Epitaphs there do we ever read the petition addressed to her—*Ora pro nobis.* Devotion seemed to rise too steadily to the Divine Son to turn

* De Carne Christi, c. vii.

† Pusey's Letter to Self., p. 215.

aside to His earthly Mother. And when at length she became the subject of the painter's art, it was only by successive steps that her image assumed a prominence among those objects of spiritual interest which enlisted his attention. At first, no attempt was made to portray the face of the Virgin, but she was always represented veiled, and the artist's highest effort was to invest this shrouded figure with all the grace and modesty he could throw around it. "We do not"—says St. Augustine—"know what was the countenance of the Virgin."* It was long before this veil was removed, and she was shown, as now, smiling on the Child before her, mingling in her looks the holiness ascribed to her, with that maternal tenderness which must have been so deeply incorporated with her nature. When that stage was reached, injurious as may have been its influence in theology, as furnishing an object of popular worship, it proved the inspiration of art. In striving after a divine idealism, the painter was raised above all earthly models, and reached the highest perfection to which human skill could attain. It gave rise to a school of Christian art, and of artists who were penetrated with the sublime dignity of their calling—men who

> "Never moved their hand,
> Till they had steeped their inmost soul in prayer."

We can see this in the spiritual tendency of the old Umbrian artists, as they first developed that devotional style which afterwards gave character to the frescoes of Giotto, and attained its maturity under Raphael. And now, as the stranger wanders through the galleries of the Pitti Palace at Florence, amid the thousand gems of art spread out before him, he will return again and again to the picture

* De Trin., c. viii.

of the *Madonna della Seggiola*, to pay his tribute of reverence there as many generations have done before him. There you behold the Holy Family, as nowhere else they have been shadowed forth by the painter's imaginings. We turn from the earnest look of the Child to the chastened loveliness of the Virgin Mother, and feel that this is the triumph of Raphael's skill. He indeed, more than any artist that ever lived, has realized our loftiest conceptions in the high ideal character of his Madonnas.

It would be interesting — did our space allow — to show the influence of this worship of the Virgin on the manners and feelings of social life during the Middle Ages. In that elevation of female character which then took place, and which gave the first impulse to reviving civilization, this was the most efficient instrument. The rude warrior who had been accustomed to look upon woman as a slave or a toy, formed insensibly a higher estimate of her sex when it was represented before him in the person of the Mother of his Lord, and he learned to value those traits of maternal tenderness and perfect purity, which the Church there held forth for his admiration. Thus were cultivated the gentler affections of our nature — those which enter into domestic life — until the whole face of society felt the influence of this new element, and what is usually ascribed to the spirit of Chivalry, was in truth a result of the increasing worship of the Virgin Mary.

And thus it was — as we have endeavored to show — the proper reverence which should be felt for the Mother of our Lord, aided by the poetic feeling which would commend it to many hearts, gradually expanded into adoration, and prayers to a new divinity became incorporated in the Liturgy of the Western Church. To so great an extent was this carried, that in the thirteenth century a Florentine order arose, named *The Servants of Mary* — St. Philip Benizzi wrote

for their use the Manual, called *The Seven Sorrows of the Virgin*— and St. Bonaventure twice paraphrased the Psalms in her honor. Long before this, churches had borne her name and been set apart for her particular honor. The first of these was the church of *St. Maria in Trastevere* in Rome, which was dedicated to her by Julius I. in the middle of the fourth century. It still stands in a retired portion of the Eternal City—the mosaics in its façade representing the Virgin and Child—and the whole construction of the building telling of its antiquity. Its granite columns, some Ionic and some Corinthian, are evidently the spoils of heathen temples, for they still bear carved on their capitals, figures of Isis, Serapis, and Harpocrates. This example was eagerly followed, and now, there is not a town within the influence of the Church of Rome, where litanies to her are not recited and solemn prayers offered.

But he who would see the honor in which she is held, must be at Genoa at the Festival of the Annunciation. This fair city of Palaces, meriting the title, *la Superba*, bears inscribed upon one of her gates— "The city of the Most Holy Mary"—and when that festival has come, the whole population seems given up to a tumult of joy. Business is suspended—a bewildering harmony of bells and chimes rings out from every steeple and tower—churches are thronged—and every where the altars of the Virgin are covered with flowers. Each person bears a tulip to remind him of her, and through every street pass the long processions with waving banners and floating incense, while solemnly the old monastic chant floats upon the air, and is heard far over the blue waters of the Mediterranean—

Ave regina cœlorum,
Ave domina angelorum,
Salve radix, salve porta,
Ex qua mundo lux est orta;

Gaude virgo gloriosa,
Super omnes speciosa :
Vale ō valde, decora,
Et pro nobis Christum exora.

Hail Mary ! queen of heavenly spheres,
Hail, whom the angelic host reveres !
Hail fruitful root ! Hail sacred gate,
Whence the world's light derives its date ;
O glorious Maid, with beauty blest !
May joys eternal fill thy breast !
Thus crown'd with beauty and with joy,
Thy prayers for us with Christ employ.

We have endeavored to trace a strange, yet melancholy chapter in the religious history of man, as he goes "sounding on his dim and perilous way." Yet the lesson we learn from it is a solemn one—the extent to which error may grow, when in our deepest interests we abandon the plain teaching of Scripture and of the Church in her earliest and purest days.

But perhaps the view we have given has in it something of harshness, as, tracing the progress of a theological error, we have turned from the softer and gentler aspects of the subject. To another then we resign the pen, that she may complete this sketch, infusing into it something of that spirit which only woman in her gentleness can give. And if her thoughts shape themselves into the measures of poetry, perhaps this may be a more appropriate form in which to embody those lovely traits in the life of the Virgin, which have attracted the affections of every age, and thus realized the fulfilment of the prophecy—"All generations shall call thee blessed."

I.

St. Mary, Virgin ever blessed !
Beneath the Cross we part,
At the dread moment when the sword
Pierceth thy very heart.
We part from thee amid the storm
Of Jews' and heathens' rage,
But once to see thy name again
Upon the Holy Page.*

II.

Of the bright cloud of witnesses
From Holy Writ that gleam,
One face of meekness, love and faith,
Dearer than all doth seem.
Oh, who can marvel thou should'st be
In ignorance adored !
Thou chosen one of all on earth !
Thou Mother of our Lord !

III.

St. Mary, Virgin, how we yearn
More of thy life to know !
A life of so much blessedness,
A life of so much woe !
But God in wisdom hath not willed
Such knowledge e'er should be ;
Beyond the darkened blood-stained Cross
We may not follow thee.

* Acts i. 14.

IV.

For forty days of ecstasy,
We *feel* where thou didst roam,
But long in vain to see the spot
Which thou didst call thy home.
Oh, that one glimpse to our dim eyes,
One shadowy glimpse were given,
To teach us that an earthly home
May glow with light from Heaven.

V.

Perchance it was a lonely place,
Men passed unheeded by,
Who would have mocked, if told how near
It towered to the sky.
But there St. Mary thou didst dwell
With the beloved one,
Him whom our dying Christ had deemed
Meet to be called "thy Son."

VI.

There, oft in early Christian times
Were lifted heart and voice,
As in your Saviour and your God
Ye ceased not to rejoice.
While still ye talked, day after day,
With earnest tearful smile,
Of Him who had departed hence
For but a little while.

VII.

Would we indeed of that bright spot
One shadowy glimpse were given,
To teach us how an earthly home
May glow with light from Heaven?
Then let us seek the Holy Word,
Which thou St. John didst write;
'Twill be as if that household blest
Arose before our sight.

VIII.

Thy word were humble as thy home
But for the light above;
Yet on thy page and on thy walls
One word is beaming—Love.
Many an earthly home might be
Like that wherein ye dwelt,
Did we but strive each day to feel
The love ye ever felt.

G. Staal. W.H. Mote.

Sara Wife of Abraham.

New-York. D. Appleton & Cº 200, Broadway.

SARAH.

BY ERSKINE MASON, D. D.

Among the names which adorn the pages of Old Testament history, not the least interesting, on account of the associations which belong to it, is that of the wife of Abraham. It is in this relation, that Sarah is first introduced to our notice, upon the sacred page. It is not, however, merely a beauty reflected upon her from her husband's name, which makes her an object of attention; for independent of this relationship, she is set before us, in a light in which she awakens interest, and excites admiration. If in accordance with the custom of ancient times, her name was given to her indicative of the qualities she was supposed to possess, there is enough in the record of her life, and in incidental hints dropped in other parts of the Bible, to justify its appropriateness, and show her to have been a *princess* in reality, as well as in name.

The power of female character, in every age of the world, has generally resulted from the possession of personal charms, or the exhibition of high mental and moral qualities. It is not usual to find both these sources of influence in the same person. Too often, the supposed or real possession of the former, is considered a sufficient apology for a neglect to cultivate the latter,—while a conviction of

their absence, is among the strongest motives to the attainment of mental and moral excellence, in such a case, the only remaining source of that influence essential in every cultivated society to female happiness. Of the two kinds of influence, none can doubt which is the preferable. The one controls us by appealing to the inferior elements of our nature; the other, by acting on the higher attributes of mind. The one is transient, the other is permanent. The one, from its very nature, must be essentially selfish; the other, spends itself in devotion to noble and lofty purposes of goodness.

And yet they are not necessarily incompatible. They have been, and they now are, sometimes united in the same person; and if the instances of their combination are rare, they are, when observed, only on that account the more beautiful.

Among the examples of this kind, truth requires us to place the subject of the present brief memoir. The entire narrative of the Bible concerning her, leaves an impression upon every reader, of Sarah's exceeding beauty. The attention she every where attracted, and especially the admiration she excited on two different occasions, among the nobility of the countries through which she passed or in which she temporarily sojourned, are the recorded testimonies to the extent and power of her personal charms — charms which, while to many minds they may serve to throw around her a peculiar interest, will at the same time teach some useful lessons, as to the snares and dangers to which such possessions expose their subjects.

Upon these, however, we do not dwell; they sink into comparative insignificance in view of her nobler and more attractive qualities of mind and heart. Aside from the direct evidences in her favor, furnished by the fact that, in the sacred volume, she is presented to us as a pattern of the domestic virtues; as one who, because she well knew her place and admirably met its responsibilities, is a bright

example to her sex,—aside from the fact, that she has been enrolled by an inspired apostle, among those of whom the world was not worthy, and that her name stands in the bright gallaxy of those who shed a light upon ancient times, and afford instruction to the present, by the illustrations they furnish of strong and intelligent faith,—aside from all this, there are not wanting illustrations, none the less beautiful and undecided, because they are inferential, of her high mental and moral qualities.

Born and educated in Chaldea, under the influence of a false religion, which always tends to cramp the intellect, enervate the energies, and debase the heart, she seems in a great measure to have escaped its power, or at least to have possessed sufficient nerve to break the shackles it had thrown around her.

Her husband, likewise, was a Chaldean—"A Syrian ready to perish," he is called by the prophet—and, though we cannot but honor the divine influence which animated and controlled him, and served to develope his character, we see in him a natural elevation of soul, evidences of a gallant spirit, showing a man of high-minded views, of noble and generous purpose, who compels our unaffected admiration. Abraham, "the father of the faithful" and "the friend of God," was, in the best sense of the terms, a pure, elevated, magnanimous man, the grandeur of whose character serves to demonstrate, and set in the happiest light, the superior excellence of his wife.

She could not surely have been a woman of inferior, or even ordinary qualities of mind and heart, whom such a man could love, and with whom he could share his warm sympathies, and strictest and closest confidence. Flippant and vacant admirers may be caught (and even they cannot be permanently held) by the color of the complexion, the archness of the look, the arrangement of a ribbon, or the affected softness of the voice; yet even their testimonies to female

influence, derived from such sources, are flattering nothings, which cease to be uttered, or degenerate into contempt, when the factitious beauty has lost her, perhaps, artificial color, and laid by her affected smile. But no tinsel decoration could attract a man like Abraham,—other and better endowments must belong to her with whom he can share his heart, or with whom he could live in the confidence of a permanent and happy association. Add to this thought another, taken from those usages of ancient Eastern society, which degraded woman to a position vastly inferior to that of the other sex, and what a testimony to Sarah's excellence is found, in the fact, not merely that she was the object of Abraham's devoted attachment, but the repository of his best and most secret purposes, a woman admitted to the closest intimacies of his heart, without whose knowledge and consent he does not appear to have matured a single purpose, nor taken a single step in life. How entirely, moreover, could she enter into all his views, sympathize with his spirit, and catching his own faith-inspired enthusiasm, consent to break up all her cherished earthly associations, and unite her fortunes to those of one, whom a weak-minded, or less intelligent and less believing woman, might have considered a visionary or a fanatic.

Harmony of character is essential to a rational union of hearts, and the confidence of Sarah and Abraham was mutual and permanent. Amid all the changes through which he passed, Sarah clung to him with the devotedness of her early attachment; nor, after years of trial, did Abraham lose his interest in her, nor withdraw from her, in the least degree, his confidence. More than once did he, in a spirit of trustful reliance, put his earthly destiny in her hands; and even while honors, corresponding to the elevation of his sentiments, were blooming upon his brow, and he was advancing in favor with God, and in dignity with man, he still continued to share with her his solicitudes

and his joys, and found his comfort in a free interchange with her of thought and feeling. In reference to the promise of God upon which hung his highest hope, and the deferred fulfilment of which was so trying to his faith, we find him opening to her the secrecies of his heart, in a manner no less honorable to her character than evincive of his own noble and ingenuous spirit.

There is, however, nothing like perfection about human nature, even in its best and happiest exhibitions. It is idle to look for it. The pictures which are often drawn, of manly honor untarnished by the slightest stain, and of female excellence without a foible, are but sketches of fancy, without beauty, because wanting the air of reality, and deprived of power, because destitute of the elements of truth. Ours is a world of weakness and of sin. The noblest spirit does not always dictate the most manly course, nor is the purest bosom always free from improper thoughts. The intellect which rises and marches among the stars, may have its moments when it falters and trips like the veriest childhood; and he of the most elevated character may, under the power of some strong temptation, be seduced into acts unworthy of his name. There are evidences of unbelief, and instances of unmanly cowardice, mingling among the noble qualities and heroic deeds which embalm the memory of Abraham himself; and there are scenes, in which Sarah shows that she was a partaker in the frailties of the race to which she belonged. If over these an inspired writer has not seen fit to draw a veil, nothing can be gained to the object of the narrative, but much may be lost to its truthfulness, by passing them in silence. We must see her as she is, if we would understand her character fully; and while we study her virtues for imitation, we may mark her errors for caution.

Oh! who, among the strongest and best, even of the stronger sex, has not his times of weakness and of fear, when transient imbecility

triumphs over general steadfastness, and his excellencies of character are eclipsed by a passing cloud?

There were hours in Sarah's history when her faith seemed to fail her, or when she caught something of the trembling spirit of her lord. Under the pressure of fear, in view of the suspected craft and misrule and oppression of the Egyptians, into whose country they were driven by famine, Abraham fell from the independence of high-minded virtue, and Sarah partook of his shame.

We cannot justify the part she acted in the scheme of equivocation and deceit, which was to pass her off, in the land of strangers, as the sister of her husband. It was, in one sense, the truth, that she was the sister of Abraham; but it was not the whole truth, and the object of its partial disclosure was, to practise an imposition. And yet it is but justice to Sarah to say, that, in the moving appeal of Abraham to the generosity of his wife, "*my soul shall live because of thee*," there was something at once touching and irresistible. There was nevertheless error here; we cannot deny it; but it was the error perhaps of attachment too strong, and confidence carried beyond its proper limits. It was an error, which shows, even in its deformity, the beauty of a trustful, relying spirit. If the father of our race showed his attachment to his wife, when he linked his fortunes with hers in her fall, no less devoted does Sarah appear, in allowing her confidence in her lord, and her wishes for his safety, to triumph over her convictions of right.

A miserable project it was, which imbecility invented, to supply the place of a trustful reliance. As is generally the case where expediency is substituted for right, the natural consequence was, an exposure to the very danger it was designed to avert. True, a divine interposition shielded them from the harm they dreaded, not however without leaving them to the bitter fruits of their folly, in self-reproach, and

contempt, and an ignominious banishment from the land in which they had sought shelter, and among whose inhabitants they might have found respect and honor. In the painful and humiliating condition to which they were reduced, in the blot put upon the fairest characters which ever adorned human nature, we learn a lesson of the folly and guilt of substituting any line of crooked policy, or equivocal action, for the noble and ingenuous conduct which results from intelligent and unshaken confidence in God.

A still darker page in Sarah's history has yet to be opened, and another tale to be told—a tale of more than equivocal action—a plan originating in that sinking of heart, which accompanies blasted hope. Ten long years had she waited for that promised son, in whom their race was to be built up; and year after year had passed, leaving her to a disappointment she now deemed hopeless.

The device she suggested was wholly her own; it was intended to forestall the doings of Providence; and while it was altogether unworthy of her—one which a well-regulated judgment could not for a moment have allowed—which she ought to have known was but planting thorns thereafter to pierce her own heart, and seeds of bitterness to rankle in her own bosom—yet its suggestion is evidence of the close sympathy between Abraham and herself, which has already been presented as an illustration of her superior character. Marvellous as it may appear to us, this was her plan: Hagar the slave, who, acquired in Egypt, should, as a memorial of the scenes through which they had passed, have taught her the folly and danger of distrusting God—Hagar was to be the mother of her heir.

If the proposal was strange as suggested by Sarah, no less strange was it as acceded to by Abraham. The inspired historian has given us no explanation of their conduct in this matter; he has left it standing a naked fact, without the record of a single circumstance to

relieve it, an evidence of the weakness of human nature, and of the lengths to which the best may go, when, renouncing their confidence in the Most High, they are thrown upon their own resources of wisdom and strength.

A fair, impartial estimate of human conduct, however, requires us to examine it in the light of all its circumstances; it may have, when wrong, not justifying, but palliating connections. Manifestly improper should it be, to judge Sarah by a modern standard of propriety, or to leave her under all the obloquy which present established rules of decorum, and the corresponding views of society, would attach to such a project. We do not in these remarks become the apologists of expediency, nor would we ever defend as guiltless the smallest sacrifice to policy of righteousness; yet, when we remember the custom of the age when Sarah lived, its frequent and allowed polygamy, and consider how prevalent usages of wrong, though they do not sanction error, are yet apt to dim our perceptions and deaden our moral sensibilities, we confess to a diminution of surprise at the policy designed to compass an end, the subject-matter of a specific promise, and in reference to which her faith had been long and sorely tried.

Sometimes, when a dark cloud lowers upon the horizon, there are streaks of light which indicate an unclouded firmament beyond it. So, in this case, we think we can see redeeming qualities, which, as evincive of a better spirit, should screen the wife of Abraham from unqualified censure. Admitting that we have here evidence of a weakened faith in God, we have likewise proof of a generosity of feeling. We cannot entertain the slightest doubt of her strong attachment to Abraham; and knowing, as we do, that, of all the passions of the human bosom, none is so monopolizing as that which binds the female heart to its chosen object, it could not have been

without the most painful sacrifice of feeling, and consequently not without a motive of intense strength, that she could have gone forward in her project. Selfishness, from the nature of the case, could not have been her moving influence; and nothing, we apprehend, could have actuated her, but a desire for her husband's glory in his rising house, evincing, in the midst of her error and blinded zeal, a tenderness and magnanimity, which shows her to have been honorable in the very folly over which we are compelled to weep.

We need not dwell upon the result — what is it but an exhibition of the wretchedness of those who make the end to justify the means? The ignoble nature of Hagar is not less distinctly seen in her subsequent impertinence, than is the lofty spirit of Sarah in the indignant resentment with which she met it. Suffering indeed was she, as she continued to suffer the bitter consequences of her mistaken, though generous policy; still we see in her that sensitiveness of a high-minded soul, which disdains nothing so much as ungenerous conduct, and which can endure with patience any wrongs but those which originate in baseness.

Not a little of her succeeding history illustrates the rectitude of Providence, which metes out, oftentimes in this life, to social delinquencies their appropriate awards. Many and severe were the trials, which, as the result of their crooked policy, Abraham and Sarah were called to endure; nor was Hagar left without tasting the bitter fruits of her vanity and arrogance.

Thus disciplined by Providence, Sarah's character shone more brightly at the last. Though sometimes, doubts and unbelief led to unseemly and dishonoring manifestations, yet, at length she seems to have been subdued to simple confidence, and then was the promise fulfilled, and Isaac was born, whose name discloses the gladness of the parental heart.

A mother, it is said, and said we believe with truth, gives character to her child, and stamps upon him the lineaments of her own mental and moral image; and thus does Isaac, the heir of promise, become his mother's best eulogist, since under her fostering care were developed those excellencies for which he was distinguished. His sweetness of temper and noble qualities, show us what his mother was—never had he shone so brightly, had she not been superior, both in mind and heart.

Thirty-seven years after the birth of Isaac, did she remain the faithful and affectionate wife, the no less faithful and devoted mother. At length her course on earth is finished, and in the Cave of Machpelah, among the sons of Heth, were deposited her mortal remains; and there did Abraham mourn for her, as one who had lost his best earthly friend, who, if she had been a partaker with him in his follies, had also shared with him in his trials, his virtues, and his joys.

Her memory yet is fragrant, as her character is instructive. If she had her faults, she had her virtues likewise; and those virtues seem to heighten, by contrast, her frailties. Had she been less distinguished for the former, the latter had been less noted. Her errors seem great and glaring, because her excellencies were so many and shining. Her history, what is it, but, on the one hand, an exhibition of the sins into which the human heart is betrayed by its distrust of God's promise, and providence; and, on the other, of those virtues which ennoble the female character, and which, as exemplified by Sarah, have placed her name among those illustrious for their goodness, and justified an inspired penman in setting her forth as a pattern of the domestic graces, an example, the imitation of which will give glory to her sex? Had she appeared without a fault, she had seemed more than human; had her faults overbalanced her excellencies, she had been an unsafe example to copy. We revere her memory, not

simply as the wife of Abraham, but as one, who, by means of her own virtues, wins our esteem and excites our admiration. Truth has embalmed her character in the sketches it has placed upon the sacred page, and we should not be slow in paying our weak tribute of respect. They honor her the most, who imitate the qualities they praise.

G. Staal. W. H. Egleton.

Elizabethe

ELIZABETH.

BY W. B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

An interest often attaches to an individual, not merely from the actions which he has performed, or from the experience of which he has been the subject, but even from the period at which he has lived. We have an illustration of this remark in the almost involuntary homage which we render to the few surviving veterans who lived during the time of our Revolution; the mere fact that they were then upon the earth,—that among the memories of their childhood is the sound of the distant artillery that told of some decisive battle, or the passing through the country of an army of which they remember little more than their dress,—even this makes them welcome to us, now in their old age; and while we transfer to them somewhat of the interest of scenes of which they were scarcely witnesses,—much less participants,—we linger about them with an unwonted reverence. But how much more intense is the interest with which we regard them, when we learn from their own lips that they were themselves a part of the history of those eventful times,—that they had a personal agency in guiding the councils or fighting the battles, which secured our nation's independence! We gladly rise up to do them honor; and we grate-

fully associate them with every estimate we form of the value of our country's liberty.

The individual whose name is placed at the head of this article, becomes an object of interest as well from the eventful period at which she lived, as from her own personal history. The world had then stood for about four thousand years. It had been the scene of an almost endlessly diversified experience; and though, in many respects, the successive ages seemed alike, yet each had its own peculiarities, illustrative of the character both of God and of man. The patriarchal or original dispensation had lasted through a long series of centuries, and had passed away; and the history of the illustrious personages who had most prominently figured in it, had become a thing of olden time. The dispensation which succeeded to that, and which was introduced by Moses, had also grown old, and was quickly to come to an end. David and Solomon and Isaiah, and a multitude of others whom God had commissioned to do great and good work for Himself, had accomplished their mission and fallen asleep. The whole Jewish economy was now waning and tottering, and even the temple itself, which every Jew recognized as the common bond of his nation, was soon to become the scene of most appalling ruin. Previous to that, however, Messiah,—not indeed *the* Messiah which the Jews had expected for so many ages, but one in every way conformed to the spirit and letter of the predictions of their own Scriptures,—was to arise, and by his life and by his death, to perform the appointed office of the world's Redeemer. Had the name of Elizabeth come down to us merely as one who lived at that interesting period, would not this alone have been sufficient, to lead every Christian at least, to think of her with some degree of interest; just as the localities which are supposed to have marked the different stages of our Saviour's ministry, arrest the eye and quicken the pulsations of every one who visits

them? What then shall we say of the interest that attaches to her memory, when we bear in mind that she was honored to take the lead in that train of events that ushered in the new dispensation; was selected by Divine Providence from all the other women of her time to be the mother of the child who should announce to the world the advent of the Son of God? In view of her having experienced such an honor, who will not say,—"Hail,—blessed art thou among women!"

The relation in which the inspired narrative first presents Elizabeth, is that of the wife of Zacharias the priest. They had lived together, it would seem, many years; and from the excellent character which is attributed to them, we cannot doubt that they had lived in that familiar acquaintance with each other's hearts, that endearing and unreserved intimacy which so well becomes the conjugal relation. But it pleased Providence at length to subject this good old man to a visitation, in itself deeply afflictive: his lips were miraculously sealed for more than three-quarters of a year, so that he had no other medium of communicating his thoughts than by signs or by writing. However grateful may have been the revelations with which this calamity was connected, the calamity itself, especially to a person in the public station which Zacharias occupied, must have been very severe; and she who was the divinely constituted sharer of his joys and sorrows, must have felt intensely the deprivation of which *he* was the more immediate subject.

Though we are not informed in respect to the kind offices which this devoted wife performed towards her husband during the months that he was incapacitated to speak, we cannot doubt that she was a model of exemplary tenderness and fidelity;—that she accommodated herself, as every good wife will of course do, to the peculiar exigences of her condition. What though her husband whose voice had been

accustomed to cheer and animate and instruct her, to direct her meditations and quicken her devotions, was dumb, so that he could not even whisper a word in the ear of conjugal affection;—this was no reason why she should cherish a spirit of impatience or complaint,—why her accustomed tenderness towards her husband, or her accustomed confidence in God, should be diminished. She feels that the duties of her station are modified by every change of circumstances; and she supplicates grace that she may accommodate herself to every change that Providence may ordain.

How beautiful is this facility of adaptation in a wife to the numerous vicissitudes of human existence. Every reader will probably be able to recall cases that have occurred within his own observation, that illustrate as well by its absence as its presence, the great importance of this quality, as an element not only of conjugal fidelity, but of domestic happiness and usefulness. I have in my eye, at this moment, a case of either kind; both of which I will describe, and then leave my reader to range through the world and find them out if he can. I will only say that the grave has rendered them both legitimate subjects of history.

I knew a man, who, about the middle of life, was smitten with total blindness. And along with this came other infirmities, which he was accustomed to say, rendered him a burden to himself. He could not find the way through his own dwelling or even to his own bed, unless some friendly hand were held out to guide him. Nor did he bear his afflictions with any great patience; on the contrary, it was difficult to please him; his vocation seemed to be that of a fault-finder; he found no pleasure even in the prattlings of his own children; the very singing of the birds without seemed almost an offence to him. His wife, who was much younger than himself, and whose education had abundantly fitted her for any station in society,

even the most exalted, always behaved towards him as a sweet ministering angel. Every one knew that her early hopes had been, in a great measure, blasted: every one knew that her gentle spirit received many a shock and many a wound from his inconsideration and petulance; but none of all these things moved her from the most vigilant and affectionate discharge of conjugal duty. She apologized for things on the ground of his blindness for which even that calamity furnished no good apology. Not a want of his would she suffer to be unsupplied which it was possible for her to reach; and she would stand over him and breathe loving and confiding words into his ear, when the response that would come back would seem to tell only of an ice-bound heart. She was the fond wife at his death-bed, and even at his funeral. She had sworn to be all this, and she faithfully kept her vow.

Now look at the other case. A husband in whose character every thing gentle and confiding and generous is exemplified, finds his strength weakened in the way, and himself the subject of a lingering, hopeless disease. His wife had been joyful enough in the days of their prosperity, and had forgotten that there were any dark days in the calendar of human existence. And when this unexpected calamity occurs, oh how poorly is she prepared to encounter it! She afflicts him by offensive allusions to her withered joys; or even if she keeps her tongue still, her countenance speaks of unwonted disquietude. She is sometimes found in circles of gayety, where the hearts of the gayest reproach her for conjugal unkindness. At length death comes to his release; and when the tidings that he is no more, go abroad, there are many to respond,—"How grateful must be the *close* of such a life!" That woman knew not how to adapt herself to any other than scenes of prosperity; when the evil days came, she had no resources either of strength for duty, or of comfort in trial.

The case of Zacharias and Elizabeth was indeed peculiar, inasmuch as the affliction by which he was visited, was immediately connected with the most honorable display of the Divine goodness towards them. How could they be otherwise than cheerful and happy, when they reflected that the occasion of this event was identified with the immediate preparation for the opening of a new and more glorious dispensation upon the world? But though others whom God afflicts cannot expect to find the *same* consolation that was vouchsafed to them, there are some softening ingredients infused into every earthly cup of sorrow; there are some blessings left to the Christian, even when the hand of God presses upon him the hardest. And it is our wisdom in the day of adversity to think not merely of the blessings which are taken, but of those which are left; and even the bitterest afflictions lose their bitterness and gather the sweetness and rise into the dignity of blessings, when they are considered as part of the discipline by which the spirit becomes schooled for its eternal rest.

But it is not merely as a wife, but as a *mother* that Elizabeth is presented to us. And there is this peculiarity in her case,—that not only the birth, but the character and the mission of her child were the subject of prophecy, and were even formally announced by an angelic ministration. Elizabeth knew distinctly, from the beginning, that her offspring was destined to perform no common work; and this knowledge no doubt must have given direction, in some degree, to her efforts in educating him. While she gratefully acknowledged God's goodness in the gift of a son, and of such a son, she manifested her gratitude by endeavoring to mould his character in accordance with what she knew was to be his remarkable destiny.

Who can suitably appreciate the tenderness, the responsibility, the surpassing interest that pertains to the relation of a mother? It is not too much to say that she is God's prime minister in moulding

both the character and the destiny of the race; and if we will know at any time what are the prospects of human society, we cannot more easily arrive at the truth, than by inquiring into the probable character of those who are to be the mothers of the next generation. Ye who sustain this relation now,—reflect for a moment what it is that devolves upon you. Your infant child opens its eyes on a world of probation, and it is for you to educate it for immortality. It has a mind, unfurnished indeed with knowledge, and yet susceptible of great and lofty acquisitions; it is for you to shed the first beams of light upon that darkness,—to give the first direction to those noble faculties which especially bespeak its divine original. It has a heart in which is the embryo of corrupt affections and inclinations, which time will certainly, in a greater or less degree, develope; and it enters a world in which the tempter has found a home,—a world prolific of evil actions and unhallowed influences; and yours is the responsibility of guiding it in the right way, when there is so much within and without prompting it to the wrong. True indeed no angel, as in the case of Elizabeth, proclaims to you, either directly or indirectly, what manner of child yours shall be; but God, by his providence and his word, proclaims to you that your influence will, in all probability, more than that of any other being, decide what it shall be; and he permits you to hope that, if you are faithful to your obligations, it shall shine at last as a gem in your immortal crown. Believe me, you are not alone, when you are striving to educate your children in the ways of virtue and piety. There may indeed be no *visible* angelic ministry about you, and yet has not Jesus said in respect to your little ones, that "*their* angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in Heaven?" Jesus himself, too, the merciful Saviour,—can you doubt that *He* sympathizes with you in your affectionate solicitude for them, when we are expressly told that in the days of his flesh,

he took little children in his arms and blessed them, and said that "Of such is the kingdom of Heaven?" If ye neglect your maternal duties, who can tell but that ye may thereby be entailing evil upon society for many generations! Who can tell but that History may record their names among the scourges of the world! Who can tell but that you may find in your own death the stinging notice of an accusing conscience, that they who might have been saved through your fidelity, have perished through your neglect! If, on the other hand, you have acted the part of a faithful mother, who shall fix the boundary to the happiness which you may secure to your children,—to the happiness which you may secure to yourself! Who shall estimate the joy of the meeting in Heaven between the devoted Christian mother and the child whom God has moulded into an heir of glory, by means of her efforts and in answer to her prayers!

There is yet another relation in which this excellent person should be contemplated,—I mean as the friend and cousin of the mother of our Lord. After the angel had delivered his message to Mary, and she had become satisfied of the wonderful honor that Heaven had designed for her, she hastened, no doubt, by special divine direction, to visit her cousin, and to commune with her in respect to the wonderful dealings of God towards them. And what an interview, or rather what a visit, must that have been! Were ever two women brought together in circumstances of such amazing interest? Conceive of them in habits of the most affectionate intercourse, revealing to each other with the utmost confidence the secrets of their hearts, viewing their own experience in connection with the great purposes of God's government, so far as they understood them, and say what could exceed the interest of the weeks and the months which they passed together. And at a later period, though the inspired narrative is silent as to their subsequent relations,—yet how natural is it to

suppose that they watched, each the child of the other, in its progress through life, with the deeper interest on account of their having been thus early associated. We know that the mother of our Lord survived him; and there is no evidence that Elizabeth did not survive both her son and her Saviour; and if such were really the case, who can imagine the emotions with which these good women, as long as they lived, must have dwelt upon the peculiar dispensations of Providence towards them, and the wonderful character and destiny of their offspring. How must the thought that the son of one of them had been beheaded, and the son of the other crucified, in connection with the glory of the Mediatorial reign and the hope that they should themselves ere long grace the Mediatorial triumph,— how must this thought have kept their minds at once full of submission and of joy, and rendered their intercourse on earth, as long as it was continued, a source of serene but melancholy satisfaction!

Let the example of these good women impress others of their sex with the privilege and the obligation of unreserved Christian intercourse, especially on occasions in which they are deeply and mutually concerned. The female heart is naturally confiding, as well as tender; and though the wife looks to her husband first, as the legitimate repository of her joys and griefs, her wishes and purposes, yet it is fitting that there should be some of her own sex with whom she can maintain a free interchange of thought and feeling. It is to be considered perhaps as one of the brightest of the signs of these latter days, that the spirit of benevolent association has begun to pervade extensively the female sex; and that, instead of being contented, as formerly, to labor in an individual capacity alone, they are banding together as angels of charity, and thereby greatly increasing the common efficiency of the age. There is scarcely a good work in which it is proper that females should engage, in aid of which there

are not to be found numerous female organizations. In bringing about this felicitous state of things, there was indeed no little prejudice to be met and overcome; but thanks to a good Providence, the world as well as the church has now yielded the point in favor of combined benevolent female action. Let them then associate more and more in the ministration of charity; and while they keep within the bounds which reason and religion prescribe, and labor in the spirit of humility and dependence and holy zeal, they will be gathering not only from within the range of their vision, but perhaps from the ends of the earth, witnesses to their fidelity, at the last day.

Was there not in the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth, and in the delightful intercourse which we may suppose them to have had, something to remind us of the associations into which mothers in our day have so extensively formed themselves? Let these associatio s be carefully and gratefully cherished. Let them be saved from the inroads of extravagance or fanaticism; of false maxims or injurious prejudices. Let them serve to deepen the sense of maternal responsibility, and to sow the seeds of youthful virtue. And may our enthroned and gracious Lord, who condescended to be once "the child Jesus," guard them by his care and crown them with his blessing!

C. Staal B. Eyles.

Miriam

New York D. Appleton & Co. 200 Broadway.

MIRIAM.

BY THE REV. CHARLES WADSWORTH.

Were the letter-press of this volume to be philosophic, we should seek in the outward life of these women of the two Testaments, the finest exemplifications of the peculiar spirit of each successive dispensation of the Church. This gallery of Scripture portraits is really, to a philosophic eye, a gallery of exquisite transparencies, wherein, as the spiritual light kindles behind them, are seen in finest contrast, the peculiarities of the progressive religious economies. Miriam, as here sketched by the artist, the queenly prophetess of Israel, the exulting leader of the choral anthems of Israel's women, is a very incarnation of the magnificently stern spirit of the Old Hebrew Faith. The Gospel could have produced no such woman; nay, the Gospel compels us to look almost with recoil, upon the picture of a woman, going exultingly forth with timbrel and dance along the shore of a sea, tossing its great waves, even then, above a kingdom's gigantic desolation. And yet, in all this we see nothing more than woman's gentle nature giving distinctly forth in life, the power of the old Patriarchal Theism. Miriam, standing so proudly up by that bright sea, a burning prophetess exulting in the triumph of her God, must be judged, not by the gentler precepts of our faith, but by the moral canons of an anterior dispensation. And thus judged, I know no

style of human character worthy, on the whole, to be matched with that of a true prophetess of Israel. A woman's gentle nature wrought powerfully on by the dread afflatus of prophecy! A woman's gentle eye with its seer's glance piercing Eternity! A woman's gentle voice burdened with the mysteries of sublimest revelations. A woman's gentle soul rapt into incomprehensible and awful converse with the Infinite—the Eternal!

But the design of this volume is not so much philosophic as biographical; and the portrait introducing this article is suggestive not so much of continuous biography as of dramatic description; and attempting therefore no connected narrative of Miriam's life, it is only with its two passages, most picturesque and dramatic, we would at present concern ourselves. The first is the vigil by the banks of the Nile. The second is the victory on the Red Sea's shore.

MIRIAM IN HER TRIAL.

It is morning upon the proud, old realm of the Egyptian, the stars have gone out in the sky, and the dim day-spring hath waxed radiant to the zenith, and arching the broad landscape with its cloudless blue, the firmament pours down its rosy light upon scenes most discordantly mingled.

Morning upon the great city of Pharaoh, and gloriously over the marbled palaces, and softly through the voluptuous pavilions, and sparklingly upon golden throne and gemmed diadem of the despot king, blazes the first fiery sunshine.

Morning upon the low roof of the menial Hebrew, and full upon the rude board, and the coarse garb, and the toilworn and sorrowful brow of the child of God, as if in mockery of a stricken and suffering heart, blazes that golden sunshine.

Morning upon the banks of the Nile, and mighty as an enchantment waking the birds into song, and warming into aroma the dewy flowers, and making each rippling wave of the stream radiant as the boss of a silver shield, flashes the same burning sunshine.

Now, note we the picture well. On yon low point of the great river, amid the luxuriant rushes that line its shore, as if haply lodged by the refluent wave, the little ark of the Levite is resting. And here, away on the high point where the clustering palms grow thick, with her little hands clasped close to her throbbing breast and her tearful eye fast on the bed of the beloved babe, the Hebrew girl stands watching. Alas for her sorrowful and most troubled watch! The night air hath been damp and chill on her tender frame, and the monsters of the Nile have broken the waters at her feet in their wild play, and the forsaken babe hath sent forth at times from its low bed a desolate cry; and yet, there since the midnight, true to the wont of her loving heart, hath she stood in her lonely watch, weak, fearful, forsaken. And this is her Trial.

Now turn we to the other and the contrasted scene:

MIRIAM IN HER TRIUMPH.

It is morning once more upon the Egyptian's land; and again radiantly upon the pinnacles of the great city, and mockingly upon the desolate dwellings of the Hebrew, are sparkling the morn's first sunbeams.

We stand now with our artist on the shore of the Sea, at the hour of Israel's triumph over the Egyptian. At the midnight watch, there were sounds on the air, as of chariot, and rushing horse, and marching men in their mighty mail; and the Host of the Hebrew fled fast in fear from the swarming thousands of Pharaoh. But with the

morning's light rose Jehovah's voice on the waters; and as the wreck of a great kingdom, the plumes and the banners, and the shattered chariots, and the breathless horses of war, and all the champions of Egypt in their brave array, have gone down before the strong breath of the Eternal! And now, by the exulting Sea which mingles its great voice with Israel's victorious anthem, Behold! with her bosom swelling, and her eye afire, and her voice ringing out like a trumpet peal to the sky, in its chant of magnificent hallelujah, she stands again in the morning light, Miriam the prophetess of God. And this is her Triumph.

Now these are the two prominent, yet strangely contrasted, scenes in the life of Miriam. And turning from the picturesque to the practical, let us gather a few points of instruction involved in these passages. And,

First. *What a lesson herein, of encouragement to faith.* We have here, in most dramatic power, faith's ventures and faith's victory. The whole transaction on the Nile, with the infant Moses, we find ascribed in the Epistle to the Hebrews, to the power of faith. It was a mother's faith, that platted the rushes and launched the babe upon the waters. It was a sister's faith that kept watch through the midnight by that wild stream. And it is altogether beyond me to conceive of faith's more masterful trial. By all philosophic likelihoods does the child Moses seem hemmed in unto destruction. Surrounded every where by death; death on the rushing stream, death at the fangs of Nile's monsters, death at the hands of the armed watchmen of Pharaoh. Ah, how can that weeping babe carry it victoriously over that despot king! And how can God's promise written so clearly out on the brow of the child, "fair unto God," be fulfilled, in the face of so terrible an antagonism! And yet, unmoved by it all, observe how the eye of the watching sister flashes through

her tears in serene trust; and all the thronging interests of the hour are cast steadfastly upon God in faith's great ventures.

Now look we to faith's victory—the shore of the great Sea. And there with his sceptre broken, and his legions scattered, and all his kingly array, plumes of light, and chariots of battle, and banners of victory, tossing wild on the wave, Pharaoh the oppressor of Israel hath gone down to his doom. But the child Moses, whose outcast bed was by the rushes, sprung now to majestic manhood, Behold! in his strength, in his glory, a conqueror of conquerors! A victor beyond all the dreams of old chivalry, he walketh the Sea's shore matchlessly triumphant! And Miriam! no longer the weeping watcher, the tried, the trustful; but Miriam the victoress! Miriam the prophetess of God! Behold how with her queenly tread, and her blazing eye, and her exulting voice, she leads the triumphs of Israel, sending up to the bending heavens, God's great hallelujah! Faith's ventures so glorious in victory!

And surely then, these pictures, so striking in contrast, should strengthen Christian faith into mastery; for they set forth alike the fact and the philosophic wisdom of Faith's great ventures: and in their study I perceive how Christian trust is, after all, but the perfection of reason. The light in that sister's eye through the lonely watch, is no blaze of fanaticism; it springs only from that eagle vision of faith which rests ever on the great Power moving the springs of the universe. She has read God's preserving purpose in the unearthly beauty of that slumbering child; and why should she fear the rushing flood, or the roaring monsters, or the menials of the princess's train, or the armed war-men of Pharaoh! Why should she not rather, in all the joy of assured faith, go on from the ventures by the Nile, to the Red Sea's victory!

And so should it be ever. Christian faith, even in its wildest

trust, is philosophic ever. It arises from the look of an eye piercing beneath outward aspects, to those hidden springs that move the great universe; and seeing God in them all, confides without fear that their working together shall be in fulfilment of His promises. And such being faith's ventures, its victories are certain. No matter for the strength of the antagonism or the aspects of discouragement, it is but taking God at his word; it is but adjusting the wheel of human hope to play into the great machinery of Divine purposes; it is but casting the anchor forth on the Eternal Rock, confident that the shattered bark will outride the hurricane; it is but watching with Miriam God's great hand on the Nile, and then chanting God's victories by the Red Sea's billows.

Secondly. But then if thus manifestly an encouragement to faith, *there is taught here, no less manifestly, a great lesson of encouragement to activity.*

Faith, even when venturing on God's promise and purpose, is at best an infatuation, if it consist not with diligent pains-taking. Herein lie the differences between presumption and faith. The one sitteth with means unused, waiting for miracles; the other worketh to the full in its own strength ere it look for interferences. Presumption would leave the child Moses in the Levite's home, trusting God to protect it; Faith will conceal carefully, and plat cunningly the rushes, and launch tenderly upon the wave. Presumption would yield the child Moses to the rushing flood unwatched by the mortal; Faith will set the sister's eye to keep sleepless vigil, as earnestly as if there were resting on him no glance of Omniscience. There must be to the uttermost, the mother's work and the sister's watch, ere there be looked for at all, an interposal of the watch and work of the Eternal. And so is it ever. Away from a Christian's creed the pitiful tenet, that because God works man may be idle.

If these contrasted pictures exhibit faith's victory, they exhibit as well, the victory of well doing. The scene on the Red Sea's shore, is but a philosophic consequent of the scene on Egyptian River. Had not Miriam watched earnestly, she had not triumphed ultimately; though there be through all the intervening record, the manifestation of God's marvellous working, yet there is the manifestation no less, of the reach of human activity; and so apparent are the steps to the great sequence, that a child can tell you that Miriam sung as an exulting victoress, only because she watched as a tender sister. As beheld in that painful night-watch, she is vastly more than a trustful venturess upon God, she is positively and powerfully a fellow-worker with God, in the ultimate salvation of Israel's champion; in the amazing glories of Israel's victories. Keeping vigil by that palmy Nile, she is touching a hidden spring in that great mechanism, whereby at last there will be rolled the Red Sea's strength on the host of the pursuing Egyptians. She is working rather than watching: and thus worketh true faith ever. It is no weak and indolent and slumberous thing; it hath a yearning desire, and a stanch purpose, and an iron sinew, and a fiery heart. It will not leave the infant Moses in the Levite's chamber because God can protect by miracle; it launches him carefully on the Nile's waters because God worketh through means even in miracles. It lulls not Miriam to dream joyously because God's eye is on the infant; it girds her to keep the more earnest watch because God watches through her; and its victory is glorious on the Red Sea's border, only because its ventures were in earnest well doing on the banks of the Nile.

Thirdly. And now combining into one, these lessons thus imperfectly sketched, how powerfully will these contrasted scenes speak of *the might of woman's influence fellow-working with God.*

If there be a truth patent in these inspired biographies, it is, that

woman's is no subordinate part in the great drama of God's moral providence. And no where does this truth show more nobly than in these contrasted pictures.

The triumph on the Red Sea's shore, we have seen to be a philosophic sequence of the Nile's lone vigil; so that, had Jochebed failed in the weaving of rushes or Miriam faltered in her earnest watch, the whole after-fate of the deliverer had been changed, and the whole plot of the great Hebrew drama disastrously marred. And it is well worthy your closest attention, how in God's economy of providence, Israel's deliverance could have been achieved by no other means. Upon careful perusal of the preceding context, the impossibility seems absolute, that Moses could be saved. By all the malign power of a resistless despot is the child hemmed in unto certain destruction. And had all the tribes of the Hebrew blood gathered in mailed strength, to sentinel his cradle, Egypt's war host had scattered them as the wind; and only the sooner for such protection, had the young child died. And yet a work manifestly too great for all Israel's chivalry, is here achieved well, through woman's ministries of love and faith. That frail ark of rushes hath surrounded the babe with a bulwark more impregnable than a munition of adamant! And the watch of that sister's eye hath sentinelled the babe more stanchly than the vigil of a diademed archangel! And resulting as this woman's work did, in the safety of the exposed ark, and Israel's ultimate deliverance, what calculus of ours shall sum its magnificent issues! Behold the maid by the river bank, her little hands pressed close to her tender breast, and her tearful eye fast in its strong love on the babe's low bed; and yet vastly more is she doing through that solemn night, than keeping watch over the exposed Hebrew. Within that ark of rushes, there lies tossed on the Nile, the germ of Israel's fast coming deliverance! The germ of a world's triumphant redemp-

tion! And yet Miriam alone keepeth vigil. And so it will seem to you, that all the miracles of that deliverance, all the matchless victories of the Tribes over the broad lands of the Canaanite, all the national splendors of the old Hebrew race, under the majestic line of her kings; yea, and farther on, in the fulness of time, all the greater glories of the Messianic redemption; the victory of the Incarnate over death; and the flashing of glad light through the grave; and the casting down of Hell's proudest array; and the ultimate enthronement on a redeemed world of the Prince of the great spiritual Israel; and the swell of the great song up in Heaven, of the thousands of thousands with palms and white robes; and all the amazing and incomprehensible issues of that redemptive plan waxing glorious through Eternity! These! All these, I say, will seem to you in the economy of God's moral Providence, to suspend themselves on woman's ministry; on Jochebed's careful toil with the rushes, on Miriam's faithful watch by the Nile. And who, then, will dare call such a ministry subordinate? Why, one of God's loftiest plans, one of God's most magnificent purposes, lies cradled and incarnate in that vessel of rushes, and woman only keeping God's watch. Not Miriam's part was it indeed, to stand girt with awful power in the presence of Pharaoh; not hers to bear that wonderworking rod along the marvellous Exodus; not hers to lead forth the armies of God, in the pomp of their victories; but yet, hers it was, to touch the wires and mingle the elements of issues as amazing; to bring unto the God of Heaven, honors as high, and acknowledgments as magnificent; watching thus by the Nile, in true-hearted love; going forth thus, with timbrel and dance, on the Red Sea's shore.

And in all this, how powerful is the lesson of encouragement, to woman, to come up to her high prerogative of efficient co-working with Jehovah. Hers has never been, shall never be, a subordinate

part in the great drama of Redemption. Having to do with our nature in its earlier developments, her influence plays into the mechanism of the moral universe at a point nearer than man's to the great Mainspring. Watching her babe's sleep, she is watching, it may be, the germ of earth's mightiest revolutions; rocking her cradled child, she is rocking, it may be, into power, the very largest of God's great purposes; leading forth her faltering infant with a feeble hand, she is launching, it may be, into glorious career, the most stupendous train of the providences of the Eternal! So that, in the winding up of the great drama, when the issues of all actions are revealed, haply it may be made manifest, that the loftiest triumphs unto the Redeemer have been won by woman's trustful faith and earnest love. And as bringing nobler glory unto God, in the power of her far-reaching influence, woman's may be the loftiest reward in the triumphs of Eternity! And more magnificent than the achievements of Israel's crowned Kings and triumphing conquerors, may seem the simple record of Israel's women. And fuller of glory on the canvas of Eternity, than even Elijah in the fire of his rapture, or Moses in the pomp of his victories, may seem these scenes in the life of this prophetess;—Miriam watching the babe by the Nile's green border! Miriam chanting God's triumph on the Red Sea's shore!

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Anna the Prophetess.

New-York. D. Appleton & Cº 200. Broadway

ANNA THE PROPHETESS.

BY THE REV. E. N. KIRK.

The narratives of Luke the beloved physician, and of his fellow Evangelists, open to our view the day-dawn of human history. It has been said, that at that period a new element was entering into human life and affairs. But this is a most inadequate description; for, an element is merely a constituent part, or an additional force; whereas, this was the introduction of a new life; the very rising of the Sun of Righteousness.

And glorious was his heralding by the Morning Star of prophecy, by the glowing fervor of expectant prayer, and by the ministry of angels. If you open in Luke's gospel, at the eleventh verse of the first chapter, and read through thirty-eight verses of the second chapter, you will say; never had biography such a beginning.

They that were waiting for the morning, saw at that period, many clear signs that the night of time was passing away, and the day was about to dawn. The last ray of traditional light had faded from the whole horizon of paganism, and left only shadows deep as the darkness of death. Judaism had become to the best spirits, the cumber-

some tutorage of a minor just prepared to enter upon his rights and responsibilities as a man. The Temple too was losing its peculiar value and interest. This was the day of which the illuminated eye of the last prophet had seen the grander, though not the sadder features; the close of a great, a miraculous dispensation; the period in which the material glory, and even the existence of the Lord's House was to pass away like starlight and the silver splendor of the moon amid the golden magnificence of day. The Roman civilization had exhausted itself; as had the Greek, the Egyptian, and the Babylonian, before it. The Roman empire was waning; and the race of Cæsars had now passed its zenith; the Roman intellect had exhausted its own treasures, and already produced its richest contributions to human progress; and a strange expectancy now possessed the minds of all men. There were still, however, many men of commanding powers and brilliant virtues in the Latin race. And yet above all the splendid favorites of the court, the successful competitors for provincial offices, and even the prominent professors of the true religion, there was one class of persons whom we regard with supreme interest. Their title often given is, "they who looked for redemption in Israel." And even among these we shall find it necessary to draw a strong line of distinction. Worldly views, and merely political feelings entirely corrupted, in some cases, even the religious expectations of the Messiah. In the case of others, these hurtful ingredients were more or less prominent, to a degree that greatly injured their character, and hindered the cordial reception of their King and Saviour, in the lowliness of his appearance, and the spirituality of his office. "He came to his own, and his own received him not." Yet there were those of another type scattered throughout the Jewish nation. They not only expected the Messiah; but their expectations were more enlightened than those of the learned, more scriptural than those

of the professed expounders of the law, more wise than princes and philosophers had the wisdom to entertain.

We select from this favored group one figure. It stands in the sacred painting, quietly and modestly apart from the central form and the higher light. Two sentences describe her. Her name, her descent, her age, her social position, her godliness, and her reception of Christ are all sketched in the briefest expressions; "and there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser; she was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers, night and day. And she, coming in at that instant, gave thanks likewise to the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." This record is not made for her sake, but for ours. It is a mere extract from "the Lamb's book of life." But it shows us that it is an extract; and thus opens to us many most precious truths. Our names are the representatives of our persons. And salvation has no value, but as it becomes personal. How important is it then to us that the Bible, the book of salvation, is, to so great an extent, a record of names! And when we remember that its claims to an infallible origin have been questioned, on the ground of its wanting authenticity, every friend of the Bible must welcome such marks as these, of its honesty and simplicity. It has the courage of truth, and dares to speak of men and places and dates, in the face of its shrewdest and most embittered enemies. Here we are told, for instance, of Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Ashur, a widow, eighty-four years of age, a daily worshipper in the temple, who, in the modern language of reproach, would be said to have "lived in the Church," but in Scripture style, "departed not from the temple," day or night.

That there was such a woman, so living in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus' birth; that she had among the Jews a high reputation for piety; and that she, in her prophetic character, recognized and worshipped the Redeemer, we have no more doubt than we have that Cæsar subdued a part of Britain. We do not know Anna, nor her father Phanuel, the Ashurite. But Caiaphas knew them, and the Pharisees knew of them, and of the verity of Luke's declaration concerning her testimony to Christ.

The favored time for her vision of Christ was at his presentation as an infant of the chosen people, and at the ceremonial service of maternal purification. Though miraculously conceived, he was still a man, a Jew; and as such, subject to all human and Jewish law, and must therefore be thus presented at the altar, some thirty days after his circumcision. The favored mother had now come up to the holy mount from Bethlehem, to present the most mysterious offering that had ever been laid before that altar. She bore in her arms the wonder of all the wonders even angels ever saw. To the eye it is but a Jewish babe. To our faith it is Emmanuel, "God and man in two distinct natures and one person for ever." She came across that large open space, within the walls, called the Court of the Gentiles. No woman's heart had ever throbbed with such emotions as she ascended those beautiful steps of the uncovered gateway leading into "the Court of the Women," a higher area which lay like a terrace above the outer court. Anna entered the inclosure just as Simeon stood with his venerable figure, holding the babe in his enraptured arms, closing his beautiful address to Mary. She beheld the wondering priest who had often officiated in receiving presentation offerings to the Lord, but had never before seen it on this wise, as he now stood, with the affectionate parents amazed at hearing the wonderful words of the venerable Simeon. The two turtle-doves brought in the mother's

hand had been offered as the badge of his humble lot who was now laying aside the riches of his kingdom. They all stood upon the tesselated pavement, under the open heaven, that probably was filled with angels unseen to mortal eyes, watching this new stage of man's redemption. The manhood of the Redeemer was there presented in offering, to the Father, according to the law; for, he was "holy to the Lord," in the highest sense. Anna no sooner saw this interesting group, and the child lying in the arms of the enraptured Simeon, than she too caught the heavenly inspiration that animated the company, and lifted her grateful song to the Lord God of Israel. Then turning to the bystanders who waited for the redemption of the Lord, she declared that this was the promised Messiah, the Hope of Israel, the Redeemer of the world.

But we cannot forget how much there was to discourage this faith. The Science, Philosophy, Theology, Wealth, Ecclesiastical and Social Power of the nation opposed it. The political influence was, from its very genius, hostile to it. There too were the prevalent notions of his exalted character and position entirely in conflict with his lowly origin and circumstances. The Messiah too was to be of Bethlehem; but they who chose not to look closely at the facts of the case, said, he was of the benighted northern tribes, a native of the despised Galilee and the contemptible village of Nazareth. How then came Anna to discern so promptly the meeting of the promised signs in him; by what elevating power was she raised above the prejudices of learned men, and of the princes of the land? We trace it to her simplicity and spirituality of character.

In so brief a mention of her, but little of her character could be given. But, as when we see some bright star just sweep above our horizon, and then suddenly dipping down from our sight for ever, we feel an irresistible impulse to fill up the chasm of its history as well as

we may, from such scanty materials. And we undertake the grateful task with as much zest as if it were ours to recover so much life from annihilation. There are here such marks of the higher forms of piety; of permanent principle that has rooted itself in regions where no worldly life can grow; of affections that have nourished themselves on the fruits of celestial trees; in a word, a life that knows so little in common with that of the many around her, that we are impelled to look to her early history as alone sufficient to account for its peculiarities. And for our conjectures concerning that early life we must rely on the analogies of Divine Providence and human experience. She lived in this world, but was not of it. Her body fed on the same perishable food which sustains all other animal life. Her feet trod the same soil with men, and with brutes. She had her place and her part in the ordinary interests of life. And yet her spirit moved in another sphere; for she lived with God, and for him. Her daily business was in the temple. Serving God was her occupation. Fasting and prayer were the characteristic actions of her life. She had, as before remarked, a spirit more wise and profound than that of those esteemed wisest in the State, or best in the Church. It regarded God more than events, and God in events. It waited on God, and for him. His promise was to it a surer indication of future events, than the most fixed laws of nature. It understood his ways, and discerned the signs of his promised coming.

So exalted were her views and sentiments, and so intimate was she with the themes of Grace, Providence and Redemption, that she was denominated a prophetess; which is indeed a signal honor. But three or four of her sex had ever received this title. And Anna is thus to be ranked with Miriam, whose prophetic spirit manifested itself in sacred poetry and music; with Deborah, who exercised it more richly and variously, in a lofty religious zeal and patriotism, in

military skill, and in her ability to judge the theocratic nation. This spirit moreover had been withdrawn from the Church, for more than two hundred years: but it was now returning, and to be exercised for a much more limited period than formerly. She appears to have had the title when no other in Israel, of whom we know, yet bore it. What duties pertained to the office, or in what manner they were to be discharged, we do not precisely know; yet it would seem that they involved some degree of publicity. There can be no doubt that in almost every case the sphere in which the glory of woman shines most perfectly, embraces the domestic, the social, and the particular religious circle in which Providence may have placed her. That some may properly pass beyond these limited circles, and lay hold on the stronger cords that bind as well as those that draw society, the cases of Miriam and Deborah might sufficiently show. It is also declared by Joel, that in "the latter day, your sons and your daughters shall prophesy." And we regard a Hannah More, sending the precious truth of the Gospel to the rich and the poor in forms so adapted to benefit them; and also the sweet hymning of many modern poetesses, as a fulfilment of that prediction—"your daughters shall prophesy." The views of mankind are yet diverse and contradictory on this important subject—the legitimate sphere of woman's direct influence. When we see a female figure rise solemnly before a public and promiscuous assembly, in plain and chaste attire, and hear her pour forth such melodious tones as fell from the lips of Elizabeth Fry, declaring in the most touching strains the love of Christ to sinners, we see the least exceptionable form of departure from the modesty and reserve which become the sex: and yet that is the precise form of it which is condemned by the Book to whose authority all Christians profess submission. When we see conventions called by women, to assert their rights, we behold a fungus on the body politic, an excrescence

growing on the tree of civil liberty. And equally far from the type of civilization which Christianity is to introduce, are the elegant follies and refined vanities of fashionable life. The world will ultimately see, that the female character lacks its vital quality where the love of God is wanting; and that there can be no proper elevation above a selfish and sentimental life, but by the fervent and controlling purpose to serve God and to glorify his name.

Anna comes to our view, a widow of eighty-four years, staid, serious, unearthly in her spirit. But she was once young; not improbably, gay, fascinating and fascinated. Yet she appears, from the sad period of her bereavement at least, probably at the age of twenty-three or twenty-five years, to have devoted herself entirely to such public service to God as pertained to her sex. Whether we are to understand by the expression, "she departed not from the temple, day nor night," that she attended every service; or, that she lived permanently within the sacred inclosure, as Huldah the prophetess lived "in the college," cannot be easily determined. In either case, it indicates that she had withdrawn entirely from the pursuit of earthly honors and enjoyments.

How then was she led to relinquish this attractive world, and yield herself so unreservedly to the claims of God? How came she to embrace a life which to the young generally appears irksome and gloomy? It was certainly voluntary and deliberate, for it was steadfastly maintained through a protracted life.

We must believe that this decision was made very early. In every age of the Church, and in every part of the world, it will generally be found, that the highest attainments of piety and usefulness are connected with early impressions on the conscience and heart. The case perhaps rarely occurs, in which the early associations of the mind are altogether vicious, or even worldly; where the freshness of

youthful affection has been wasted on vanities; where the judgment has been conformed to false views of God, redemption, happiness, the world and personal character, that even the grace of God has produced such a transformation as to make there a strong and harmonious Christian character.

We must indulge another conjecture, where so little positive information is furnished, and presume that the influence of maternal piety is to be seen here. There is an undefinable period of infancy in which the mother's power, especially over a daughter, is unrivalled. Under her tuition and guidance, and, as a general rule, according to them, these great questions are determined: Shall the conscience or the will take the helm? shall the selfish or the benevolent principle be laid at the foundation of the character? shall God or the world be the object of supreme pursuit?

One who has shone brightly in the Church, used often to relate that her father and brother were ambitious for her. They sought to make her prize worldly enjoyments, and aim to be brilliant. Her mother, quiet, gentle, and heavenly-minded, never issued a command contradictory to that of the father. But, on one occasion, when adjusting the dress of her gay little daughter to attend a ball, the warm tear fell from her eye upon the cheek of the thoughtless, yet affectionate child. That unbidden, unintended, silent tear, even unconsciously shed, was the very messenger of God to that little spirit. It moved a world of thought and emotion; it told the deep sorrow of an afflicted heart; it seemed to come like a drop from heaven, telling of the fountain of maternal love and grief it had forsaken; it told of solitary hours spent in pleading with a covenanting God for a thoughtless child. It so deeply affected the soul of that child, that, during the whole evening, amid a company who were living to please themselves, she could not forget that she must live to please God.

We are not informed even as to the name of Anna's mother; nor have we the means of estimating the character of Phanuel. From the manner in which his name is introduced in this narrative, he probably was a man generally known in Jerusalem, and one of whom men would deem it natural to believe that such a woman as Anna, was his daughter.

But under whatever human influence it may have been, and at whatever period of her life, Anna must have given herself under the power of the Holy Spirit to the service of God, by an act of consecration, full and earnest. She saw that religion is the "one thing needful;" the great business, and the supreme interest of life. "I must be like my dear sister who died," was a frequent appeal made to herself, by one who had not yet consented to renounce the world. "I must please God," is the conviction that brings many a child to pray for forgiveness and for a renewed heart. "I longed," says one who became eminent for piety, "to be like those children of whom I read in Janeway's Token for Children. I too wanted to love the Saviour, and have him love me." How often, may we presume, Anna would go alone and weep and pray that she might be good, and go to God when she should die! And sometimes very young children are brought to a very deep conviction of their sinfulness. They see some degree of the holiness of God, the end of all worldly good and glory, the utter depravity of their own selfish and worldly hearts; and, what it would be for God to give them up to love and pursue the world, and then "lose their own souls" at the last. This conviction brings on, in many cases, a painful struggle; for, the claims of God are seen to conflict with worldly ambition, with social influences inimical to piety, with a pride of character, and a self-righteousness that is reluctant to be saved only by another's goodness. The world is generally fascinating to the inexperienced. And they must

renounce it on the testimony of God, who says that "he who loves the world, is the enemy of God." The struggle then is usually on these two points: the renunciation of all claim to God's love; the renunciation of every creature as a substitute for Christ as our supreme good. We have seen a dear child deliberately weighing these momentous questions; and in the fullest view of what they involved, determining with Paul; whatever ground of confidence I have before man, I have none before God, "yea, doubtless I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." We have known such a one deliberately thinking on all that Christ required her to renounce, and then cheerfully saying: "Lord, I give up all for thee."

From this starting point of self-consecration the soul is generally led through sunshine and shade; sometimes through broad and open ways, and then through rocky and entangled paths. There is often decision, penitence, earnestness of purpose, even faint love, long before joy is experienced; to trust an unseen God, and renounce the habit of depending on self; to give the eternal future dominion over the transient present; to set an unseen Saviour against all the fascinations of the world; to take a firm and independent stand in regard to its amusements, its requirements, its customs, and its maxims; these are positions gained, often with much struggle, meditation, prayer and fasting. And could young Christians but know how important it is that these steps should be taken, without regard to present enjoyment; would they but consent to sow these heavenly seeds, even weeping, they would then be indeed followers of their self-denying Lord, and in due time, enter into his joy. We may be sure that Anna had made a full consecration of her heart, her time, her house to God. Entire simplicity of Christian character can never be attained by any thing short of this.

The inquiry now recurs; how did Anna obtain such light in regard to the person of the Messiah? Like every other "good and perfect gift," it certainly came "down from the Father of lights." We are always permitted, however, to connect the eminent success of God's servants with their eminent piety. As it is said of Barnabas; "he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith; and much people was added to the Lord." And as we say of Whitfield and Edwards, they were very successful ministers of the word, for they were wholly consecrated to the work of the Lord. Their clear apprehensions of the person and work of Christ were the reward of earnest seeking and of unwavering faith. So we say of Anna, her clear apprehension of the presence of Messiah in the person of that poor babe at that time, was the consequence of eminent spirituality of character and of entire simplicity of heart in interpreting the language of the Scriptures. There is no duty which is more intimately connected with a proper condition of the religious affections, than that of comprehending the language and applying the truths of the Bible to our own consciences. The pride of learning, the pride of reason, and the pride of self-righteousness; the love of the world; the distorted eagerness of personal advancement, comfort or distinction, all have much to do with our understanding of the Scriptures. "If any man will do his (God's) will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." All the theological opinions, and all the views of the Messiah which led to the rejection of Jesus' claims, were notions forced upon the Scriptures, and not legitimate deductions from their teaching. The time of his advent had been so definitely pointed out, as to awaken universal expectation. Both Bethlehem and Galilee were recognized in the prophecies as connected specially with it. He was to be a glorious king, yet a servant of rulers; a conqueror, yet a meek, lamb-like sufferer. They were to see divine glory and human

infirmity meeting in the same person. But pride and worldly desires controlled the majority, even of the Jews. They consequently selected only such features of the Messiah's personal character and official work as suited their purpose. It has ever been thus; and probably will be to the end of time, that "the eye must be single," or "the whole body will be full of darkness." The mere possession of light is not sufficient; for, the Lord has said: "if the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness?" Wrong interpretations of the Old Testament not only led to the rejection of Christ, but even made that rejection a dictate of conscience, and an occasion of self-congratulation. On these grounds men are responsible both for the origin and the consequences of their religious opinions. The announcement of Christ's coming was so explicit, that the humble, the spiritual, the penitent and believing, were by it more or less prepared to identify him at his appearing. At the same time, the prophesies were so framed, that men remained free to pervert their meaning, and could find plausible reasons to fortify themselves behind passages taken in a partial sense. Then, as now, and now as ever hereafter, in order to look upon Jesus with a full belief in his exalted claims, there must be personal and inward correspondence. He appears not as an object of admiration, but to be a Saviour to the lost. And although one may recognize the personal qualifications of a physician, without feeling their own need of his services; and, although a person may recognize the claims of Jesus to be the Messiah, without true conviction and repentance, yet, to receive him cordially at this day, and to have acknowledged him openly, at that period, with a sincere heart, demanded the deep sense of spiritual necessities; the want of a Mediator for reconciliation with the Father, of an Almighty helper in the conflict with its enemies, and of an Almighty power to transform the heart.

Anna's waiting upon God with fastings and prayers, for long years, were now openly rewarded in her being permitted thus publicly, and thus early, to recognize and proclaim her Saviour. She had a heart in harmony with the Scriptures, and with Providence; with God, his people on earth, and his holy messengers from heaven. And hence no signs were lost on her. The announcement of the angel to Zacharias that his son should be the forerunner of the Messiah referred to by Malachi; that of Gabriel to Mary, that she should give birth to the promised King of Zion; the testimony of Elizabeth to Mary; that magnificent hymn of Zacharias; the announcement of the angels to the shepherds, and the public promulgation of the shepherds; the testimony of the Magi, of Mary, and of Simeon; all these Anna welcomed, and comprehended, while proud Scribes and self-righteous Pharisees disdained to be convinced by them.

We see then in Anna the nature and value of expectant faith. It is called into action by the promise of God. It believes what he declares, in spite of reason's remonstrances and the present appearance of things. It controls the life, because it controls the heart by the immeasurable superiority of those facts on which it rests. All worldly and selfish anticipations sink into their proper insignificance before the glory and loveliness of God's promised blessings. It can labor if God requires labor for the fulfilment of his word; it can wait where patience is duty; it can suffer where salvation is to come "through much tribulation." It can pray, it will pray; it can "offer up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears;" yea, even "praying in the Holy Ghost," "with groanings that cannot be uttered," until the Lord come, and his salvation be made manifest to Israel.

So Anna waited on God, so she looked for the Messiah. Sixty years was a long period for one to be held in suspense. Many

perhaps wondered at her weakness in so early renouncing the world; many could see no reason for such incessant occupation in the services of the temple. But she understood herself; and infinitely better, she knew Him in whom she believed. Her expectation from man had ceased, ceased for ever. The creature had no blessing that could satisfy her. She aspired to the favor of God; to hold daily communion with him; to wait in his courts; to promote his worship; to attend on him at his lowly coming. Those long years finally passed away, and with them had gone many a gay companion of her childhood; many a worldly spirit, who could not see the glory of those objects to which she so exclusively devoted herself; they had gone to that world where all illusions vanish, and where the Creator's service appears the only true employment of created faculties. Anna still remained, to show how faith in God can sustain the soul amid the wreck of earthly hopes; to aid the Church in that mysterious work of prayer by which God accomplishes his purposes; to give her testimony to them whose faith was less enlightened or less elevated than her own; to assure them that the babe of Bethlehem was the King and Saviour of the world.

But her turn at length came, when she too must pass to that unseen world. In all probability she did not live even to witness the public manifestation of the Lord, much less to hear his divine teachings and promises. But hers was still a glorious work to prophesy in other worlds; to tell adoring angels and waiting saints, what she had seen on earth. Nor dare we trust our imaginations to fill out the scene which must have been witnessed when the ascended Lord entered that temple which contains the glory of the universe. And was not Anna there too, to behold! And did she not again give "thanks unto the Lord, and speak of him to all them that had looked for that redemption!"

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Rahab

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RAHAB.

BY THE REV. A. A. WOOD.

Let us go back twenty-three hundred years, to the ancient "city of Palm Trees," as it appeared to the men of Israel.—Situated upon the banks of the Chorith, a small tributary of the Jordan, some seven miles from that river, Jericho was one of the most considerable cities of ancient Canaan. Nature had given it a situation combining both security and beauty. It was protected, on the one hand, by lofty and precipitous mountain ranges, rising almost perpendicularly above it; while, on the other, a plain of surpassing fertility lay at its feet, descending by a succession of natural terraces into the rich valley of the Jordan. Multitudes of palm trees which every where lifted their graceful cylindrical trunks, crowned with tufts of long feathery leaves, had given the city one of its names; while, intermingled with them, or standing in close proximity, were fragrant balsams, poplars spreading their silvery foliage, and oleanders covered with clustering flowers, The plain of Jericho might deservedly be considered the garden of a land which every where "flowed with milk and honey." In addition to the rare productiveness of its soil, there are not wanting intimations in the sacred narrative that the city had considerable commercial intercourse with neighboring nations. The shekels of silver,—the wedge of massive gold, and especially the "goodly Babylonish

garment,"—a robe rich with the gems and gold of Assyria, which afterwards proved but too attractive to the heart of an erring Israelite, in connection with the careless and indolent security of the inhabitants, furnish no doubtful evidence that the people of Jericho had reached a point of prosperity, where wealth and luxury eat out the virtues and undermine the strength of a community.

It was in the afternoon of one of the early days of April, that two strangers were seen approaching the city by the way of the Jordan. They were both young, and clad in the dark flowing robes of the East. Anxious evidently to avoid particular notice, they turn aside to the waters of the fountains, or linger for a moment amid the groves of stately trees. As they come nearer to the city, they direct their attention to its means of defence; now marking the structure of its massive walls; now examining the strength and fastenings of the gates; and now measuring with the eye the height of the lofty towers which seem to watch and guard against any hostile approach. They find easy entrance to the city; for to the sentinel they seemed only a couple of mountain shepherds, seeking to gratify an idle curiosity, or perhaps wanderers from the plains of Moab, who, in the distracted condition of their own country, had come to find refuge in Jericho. To a more observant eye, however, there was that in the appearance and conduct of the men which indicated a loftier character and purpose. They have evidently some important business in hand. They pass from street to street; now noting with careful attention the military fortifications of the place; and now mingling with the idle groups, which, gathered here and there in places of public concourse, are discussing the current news. But one ruling topic, however, seems to engross every mind,—the sudden emerging of the Hebrew host from the desert; the terrible overthrow of all the nations who had opposed them; the wonders wrought for their protection and

preservation in the wilderness; the mysterious pillar of cloud and of fire which had led them on; the terrible uncertainty as to their future course when the floods of Jordan should subside—were in every mouth, filling every heart with astonishment and terror.

Thus the day wore on. The deepening shadows of the western mountains remind the travellers of the necessity of finding a shelter for the night: but whither shall they turn? They have already noticed looks of watchfulness and suspicion directed upon themselves. They are strangers in a city of strangers, and any inquiries of the inhabitants might only betray their foreign accent and lead to their arrest by the government. Happy for them, however, Jericho, with all its wickedness, was not destitute of the hospitality of the East. Some kindly influence led them to select a place of refuge admirably adapted to their purpose. It was removed from the heart of the city—a house built upon the very walls. If they should be pursued here, there might be a chance of escape. As the event proved, they had not sought its shelter too soon.

The eyes which had watched them in the market-place had traced their steps to the house of Rahab. Rumors of their presence, and suspicions of their character and their business began to fly about the city. The shouts of the rising mob fell upon their ears. A little longer, and the emissaries of the government would be upon them. In this emergency, they sought the aid of their hostess. There was a friendly and intelligent interest in all her actions, which invited their confidence. They make known to her their circumstances and their errand. They tell her of the danger which threatens them. They ask her help. It is enough; for when did the voice of distress ever appeal to woman's heart in vain? There is no time to be lost. She leads them to the house-top, and hides them among the bundles of flax with which the flat roof is covered.

Meanwhile the startling intelligence had been brought to the king,—that two men, probably Hebrews, had entered Jericho as spies, and were at that moment lodged in Rahab's house. Nothing could have alarmed him more. If, up to this hour, he had hoped that the swellings of Jordan would oppose an effectual barrier to the progress of this strange and terrible race, that hope is gone. Flushed with their recent victories over the Amorite kings,—wild and hungry as the beasts of the desert from which they have emerged,—these wandering tribes, who have already broken every opposing arm, are about to rush upon Jericho. Do the barbarians venture so far? Happily their emissaries are now in his power. He takes his measures at once. He dispatches a sufficient force to the house of Rahab, to make them his prisoners; or if they resist, to put them to death. The king's command is most urgent. The fugitives, in their distant hiding-places, catch the sound of the hurried approach and the heavy tread of armed men. There is a fierce knocking at the gates of the house: "Bring forth the men which are come to thee." They listen in breathless suspense for the answer of their protectress; but they cannot catch its faint words. Again the officer shouts forth: "The men that are entered into thy house." And now they seem to hear her say: "Shall I be treacherous to those who have claimed my hospitality, and give them up to men who seek their life?" "But they are not true men—they are enemies; spies. They are come to search out all the country." Well may the strangers fear,—shall a weak woman withstand the mighty king? Will she bring upon herself the whole weight of the royal displeasure to aid those who are thus openly denounced as the enemies of her country? How anxiously must they have listened for her reply. "There did come men to my house, but I knew nothing of their character or their purpose; and about the time of shutting the city gates, just at dark, they went out.

I know not where they went; but if you pursue them immediately, you will probably overtake them." The ready deception of the woman is successful. The pursuers immediately departed,—some, taking the road to Jordan, to intercept the spies if they should seek to regain the Hebrew camp; and others, stationing themselves as an extra guard at the city gates, to prevent their escape if they should still be within the walls.

Soon as the street was still, Rahab sought her stranger guests. If hitherto she had had any doubt as to their true character, that doubt was now removed. She had already ventured her life and braved the anger of her king to save them, and the danger she had incurred only deepened her interest in these objects of her care. To look at this little group upon the house-top, as seen in the dim obscurity of the night, we might suppose that their respective positions had been entirely changed. She, the protectress and deliverer, seems now the obliged and helpless party. She speaks to them, as if not only recognizing the princes of Israel, but as if, at the head of their conquering tribes, they were already masters of Jericho, and had the supreme power in their hands. Few are the words which pass between them, but those words are full of meaning. "I know," said she, "that Jehovah has given you this country. We have heard the tidings of your approach. The land has been full of the wondrous story of your passage through the Red Sea years ago, and of your more recent victories over the Amorite kings on the east of Jordan. The whole nation trembles and faints at your coming. And well it may. The Lord your God is the all powerful and every where present Jehovah. He is God in heaven above and in earth beneath. And now, forget not the kindness I have shown you to-night. Promise me, by Jehovah, that when the hour of your triumph shall come, you will save my life and that of my father's house." The men are not

taken by surprise at this communication. They seem already to see the proud city in their power. Every feeling of gratitude prompts their answer. "Our life for yours, if none of your family divulge our secret, that, when Jehovah has given us the land, we will deal kindly and truly with you."

She asks for some token of this compact; and taking up a scarlet cord beside them, they direct her to bind it in the window of her apartment over the city wall. It should answer the same purpose of protection as the blood of the passover sprinkled upon the door-posts of the Israelitish dwellings. The fierce soldier should take note of this, when in his course of blood, and should leave her house unharmed. The engagement is made, and bidding the men hide themselves in some one of the mountain caves, at no great distance, she, with the aid of her servants, lets them down from the window. They pause an instant to exchange assurances of mutual fidelity, and the men are soon lost to sight amid the thick shadows of the night.

The days which followed were full of anxious interest to the people of Jericho. The men who had been sent in pursuit, returned to report their fruitless search. They had explored every part of the surrounding country, they had watched every path, but they had discovered no traces of the fugitives. Meanwhile messengers come from the Jordan to announce new causes of alarm. The Hebrew camp is in motion. They have reached the bank of the river. Its bed is dry beneath their feet. The waters, arrested by some invisible power, rise, like a perpendicular wall, beside them. The whole body of the people has reached the western shore, and the river again fills its channel. Shall we wonder as the marvellous story flies from tribe to tribe, that "their heart melted; neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel?" If such was the terror which pervaded even the most distant clans, what must it have been

in that city which now lay directly in the path and almost in sight of the advancing hosts? How shall its panic-struck garrison go forth to encounter an army of six hundred thousand men, sustained by the manifest presence of a terrible God, and whose only path hitherto had been from victory to victory. The enemy is already at Gilgal, within a few furlongs of the city walls. And yet for days it tarries there. There is no mustering of its troops,—no onward movement,—no preparation for attack. Why are they thus inactive in the very heart of a hostile country? Has sudden fear stricken them? Are they dismayed at the height and strength of the walls of Jericho? Are they about to find it a very different thing to attack a city thus strongly fortified than to encounter the forces of the Amorite and the Moabite in the open field? Thus the week of the Passover went by. In the camp of Israel all was confidence and security as the people renewed their solemn covenant with God; in the city of Jericho all was consternation and dismay. At the same time no precaution was neglected which might avail in such an emergency. "Methinks," says an old divine, "I see how they called their council of war, debated of all means of defence, gathered their forces, trained their soldiers, set strong guards to the gates and walls, and now would persuade one another that unless Israel could fly into their city the siege was vain." But even as they speak, the camp is moving; there is a sound of the issuing host. As the waving pennons and glittering arms appear in sight, the cry passes along the walls—"they come!" But how silent and ominous is their approach! The choicest troops of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, an army of forty thousand men, lead the way. Next appears that mysterious ark, covered with its purple pall, which the superstitious heathen had been wont to regard as Israel's God! Some scout from Jordan reports that it was this which, by its mighty power, had upstayed the rushing

waters, and protected all the passing host. Seven men clad in the robes of the Jewish priesthood precede the ark with sounding trumpets,—while the sixty thousand warriors of Dan bring up the rear. The mighty procession moves on; it begins to encircle the city. And yet throughout the whole host, there is heard no warlike shout —no voice of command. In all that was awful and imposing to the eye, nothing meets the ear but the trumpet's blast, prolonged till it dies away in the still air.

But where are the preparations for the assault? Where the military engines to attack the walls, or the ladders to scale them? Or, if they despair of any attempt at this, where are the preparations to undermine their deep and strong foundations? Do these wanderers of the desert—these fugitive slaves of Egypt—think that the massive fortifications will totter and crumble by merely looking at them? Is there some strange principle of repulsion in the beleagured town, that, though this huge host encircles it, they cannot and dare not approach its gates? And when day after day passes by, each morning bringing with it the same silent procession, in the same measured step, and yet no indications of attack; not even the drawing of a single sword, or the hurling of a single stone; the apprehension of the citizens passes away, to be succeeded only by derision and scoffs. "Six days," we seem to hear them say, "we have looked at this walking enemy. They must have given our city a thorough inspection; they must know by this time how many paces round it. They have come somewhat earlier to take their accustomed walk to-day. Well, if this be all, we have no great reason to tremble before the power of Israel."

But there was one in that city who had watched this strange procession with no common interest. Rahab sat by the very window from which she had aided the spies to escape, and about which she

had been careful to bind the scarlet cord,—the token of deliverance and safety. Day by day had she watched the vast and awful procession,—each returning morning bringing with it new hope, and each setting sun witnessing a more anxious suspense and a further trial of her faith. Now her ears were pained at the impious jeers of her wicked countrymen, and now her heart was wrung at the thought of their approaching destruction. Now her faith was ready to stagger at the delay of the promise, and now she was ready to faint at the thought that the spies had forgotten their engagement, or that the token to which she had bound all her hopes would be overlooked in the destruction of the city. But she has not long to wait. The immense procession of the Hebrew host moves on with a swifter step. She sees that it does not, as on other days, repair to the camp at Gilgal after a single circuit. It moves round the city again and yet again. The crisis is evidently hastening on. Six times this day has Jericho been thus encircled. It is now the seventh, and even while she gazes with throbbing heart, she hears the voice of the Jewish leader rising loud and clear above even the trumpet's peal, "Shout! for Jehovah hath given you the city." Instantly from myriads of voices, as the sound of many waters, there bursts forth the long exulting shout of the whole mighty host. There is a sudden heaving and shaking all around her—a wild despairing cry as of a people crushed and perishing, and she starts to find that the huge walls on either hand have fallen to the earth, and her house alone stands firm. There is the onward rushing of the host—they enter the city on every side, and ere she has recovered from her astonishment and terror, her Jewish friends are at her doors, calling for the members of her household, and ready to lead them to the camp of Israel.

This remarkable woman appears only once again in the sacred narrative, on the occasion of her marriage to one of the princes of

Judah, the honored ancestress of David, and of David's divine and greater Son. Two inspired apostles, however, have mentioned her name in terms of the highest commendation. Paul has enrolled it in the glorious catalogue of those of our race who have so signally illustrated the conflict and conquest of faith; while James has assigned to her, if possible, a still higher rank, placing her side by side with Abraham as a most illustrious example of the faith imputed for righteousness.

There can indeed be little doubt that, in her earlier years, her life had been far from the paths of virtue; and no one can deny that the directions she gave to the royal messengers concerning the spies, involved a gross departure from the truth. But to this it may be said, that from the time of her appearance in the sacred narrative, we know of no stain upon her personal character; and in that crisis when the representatives of the people of God sought her help in their extremity, it may indeed be difficult to determine what other course she ought to have taken. She might have been silent; she might have acknowledged the presence of the spies in her dwelling. But, knowing as she did, that God had given the land to Israel, being assured that the city with its inhabitants was to be destroyed, she would, in either case, have exposed both her guests and herself to death, without in the least degree averting the ruin of the city. She might have reasoned that deception in such a case could do no harm; while it might save the lives not only of those who shared her hospitality, but of herself and her father's house. If then, in her ignorance, she acted upon those principles of false morality in which she had been educated, and which were universally prevalent among her people, and was guilty of actual falsehood in relation to the spies, we may cease to wonder at, if we cannot excuse, her conduct in deceiving the men who sought their life. And before any one pleads

her example in excuse of his own departure from truth, let him wait till a recurrence of the same circumstances shall justify his conduct.

Rahab appears before us invested with many of the virtues which adorn the female character.

In her breast was the *law of kindness.* She received and protected the men of Israel when they sought the shelter of her roof, though she knew it was at imminent hazard. They were strangers, foreigners, enemies, spies. They had come for the very purpose of exploring her country that they might destroy its inhabitants, and seize upon its territory. But when they sought at her hands hospitality and help, she hesitated not a moment. With a spirit of generous self-sacrifice, she identified herself with her guests; she made their case her own; and though every other house in Jericho should be shut against them, hers should be open to receive them, and should afford them its protection, even if the king at the head of all his guards were thundering at her gates.

She possessed peculiar *energy* and *decision* of character. Prepared by the Spirit of God for that eventful crisis, she saw the whole case before her. That she was not without love for her country, we may infer from the love which she bore to her kindred. There must have been a sore, albeit a short struggle, in her breast when the question presented itself, whether she should give up her city and her people, and cast in her lot with utter strangers; but she saw it to be the question whether she should do the will of God and share the portion of his people, or whether she should continue in the sin and share the destruction of his enemies. In such a case, she felt that she could not hesitate; her mind was made up. With the decision of that noble daughter of Moab, whom perhaps she was spared to welcome as the wife of her son, she was ready to say to each of her guests: "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

Having formed her determination, she acted upon it with promptness and energy. She saw the pressing danger, and resolved at once upon her course of conduct. Another mind would have been paralyzed with terror, but hers rose to meet the emergency. While her heart must have trembled for the safety of her guests, her courage did not fail her. Her instant and successful concealment of the spies, her ready tact in averting suspicion from her house and directing the pursuers elsewhere, under such circumstances of agitation, indicate a mind not only fertile in its resources, but prompt and resolute in all its actions.

But it is as a rare example of *heroic faith*, that the character of Rahab especially commends itself to our attention. She was an ignorant heathen. From her infancy she had been taught to bow in worship to the idols of her country—the stock and the stone. She had known of no other religion,—no other God. Yet now, as from time to time she had heard the strange tales of this strange people, a nation whose religion was their peculiar characteristic, her attention was roused, her interest excited, her heart touched. A singular Providence had brought two of this people to her dwelling. We may believe that she was not backward in improving the opportunity thus afforded her of inquiring after such a God. The knowledge that she thus obtained of Him, came as a gleam of light upon her darkened mind. She had as yet no promise that God or the people of God, would receive her. She knew not but they would spurn her from them as a polluted thing, but her heart was fixed. She would serve that God; she would, if need be, sacrifice herself for his people. She knew not how this would avail her, but whether saved or lost, whether she should escape the ruin which she knew was coming upon her country, or whether she should be overwhelmed in the general destruction, she was determined to do right. She felt that she could

safely leave the issue in the hands of Him, whom, with the feeble light vouchsafed her, she had found to be the true Jehovah—the "God in heaven above and in earth beneath." The result demonstrated the soundness of her conclusions. Hers was the faith which proved the "substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The pen of inspiration has recorded her honored name, and the spirit of piety in every age has loved to look to her as one of that sainted number, the light of whose example rests upon the path to Heaven.

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Herodias.

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HERODIAS.

BY EBENEZER HALLEY, D. D.

Truth is seldom heard in the palaces of kings. Every avenue through which its unwelcome voice may be admitted is studiously closed, and they are beset on every hand by interested minions and sycophants, who address them in the most fulsome strains of courtly adulation. Should they perform any deed of clemency or justice, it is invariably extolled beyond its merits, while the most glaring acts of oppression and rapacity, of criminal pleasure or profuse expenditure, are vindicated on the ground that eminent station screens its possessor from the dread of censure or the possibility of punishment. Is it wonderful that, under such corrupt influences, the majority of monarchs should have disgraced the royal purple, and their names be consigned to indelible infamy on the page of history? Contemplate a being introduced at his birth into the luxury of a palace—profound statesmen and aged warriors paying him the most suppliant homage around his cradle—his wayward inclinations and capricious wishes in childhood entirely indulged—his education, instead of bracing the powers of his intellect and securing him against the contagious influences that surround him, confined to a few superficial accomplish-

ments — taught to regard himself as superior to all control and independent of the tribunal of public opinion; is it wonderful that under such perverse influences, a being, with the elements of a depraved nature within him, should, on his accession to a throne, be tyrannical, perfidious, sensual, effeminate, engrossed with the pursuit of his own selfish schemes, and indifferent to the rights and happiness of others? Comparatively but few names are to be found on the page of history that have shed a lustre around the crown which they wore; and they should challenge our admiration the more, that their virtues were cherished under such a vitiating atmosphere.

Herod, whose name is incorporated with this narrative, was not one of these exceptions. His father, who is usually known as Herod the Great, was king of Judea at the nativity of our Saviour, and apprehensive in this event of a new rival to his throne, he caused all the children to be massacred in Bethlehem under a certain age. At his death, his kingdom was divided among his four sons. Archelaus reigned in Judea; Philip was tetrarch of Iturea; Lysanias, of Abilene; and to Herod Antipas, was assigned the region of Galilee: hence he is commonly termed, in the New Testament, the tetrarch of Galilee. The character of the last of these is depicted by Josephus in the most unfavorable colors. He governed his subjects with oppressive severity, and never scrupled to perpetrate acts of flagrant injustice and atrocious cruelty, when these would advance his measures of state policy. Nor is there any thing in his private life to redeem the infamous character of his reign or excite our respect and esteem. With a baseness that showed a mind familiarized to every species of depravity, he invaded the hallowed sanctuary of domestic life, and seduced Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip of Iturea. In the purest epochs of the Jewish nation, such a grave offence would have been regarded as insulting alike to their country and religion, and have

subjected the transgressor, however eminent his station, to the penalties attached to it in the divine law. But alas! for Israel, her glory had departed. That goodly stem which had cast forth its branches on every side verdant with blooming foliage, and fragrant with golden fruit, now existed in stunted deformity and rottenness, the caterpillar had devoured its beauty, and the canker-worm preyed upon its heart. The introduction of frivolous and unmeaning ceremonies had supplied the existence of vital piety. The expectation of a temporal Messiah diverted the minds of the people from contemplating the purposes of God in the arrangements of his grace, and it is not therefore to be wondered that among servile courtiers, a venal priesthood, and a community where the external forms of religion alone existed, such a scandalous offence should have been permitted to pass uncensured, notwithstanding its pernicious influence upon public morals. There was one, however, who was found "faithful among the faithless." This was John the Baptist. He was a man of stern and austere habits, of indomitable courage, of a resolute devotedness to duty, which could neither be diverted by favor nor frown. It is probable that his temporary seclusion in the wilderness may have given rise to, or at least strengthened, some of the features of his character. The habits of an individual are greatly moulded by external circumstances. Had John always resided in the populous city, he would still have retained his ascetic and morose habits; how much then were these cherished when he lived as a *solitaire* in the vast desert, wandering on the summit of the hoary mountain, or reclining in profound meditation on the margin of the dark lake. Communing thus with nature in her wild and savage grandeur, his raiment composed of the hair of the camel, and his only food the locust or the wild honey obtained from the seams of the rock, it is not astonishing that when he appeared on the banks of the Jordan, he arrested the attention of the multitude,

or that with the stern enthusiasm of a reformer, he should lash with unsparing invective the degeneracy of the age, denounce the superstition of the Pharisee, and the skepticism of the Sadducee, and predict the judgments of Heaven upon all classes unless they should speedily repent.

The fame of John reached the royal palace, and Herod expressed an anxious wish to hear him. If the Baptist had been ambitious to secure the favor of the king and rise to influence and distinction in his court, his policy was sufficiently obvious. A temporizing preacher would have expatiated on the memory of the deceased Herod, and the influence of his eminent services on the stability and commercial prosperity of Judea; or if allusion to religious topics seemed necessary, he might have descanted on the benevolence of the Deity, the marvellous doings of his providence to the Jewish nation; or the fulfilment of prophecy by the recent coming of the Messiah. Nay more, if it would have sullied the reputation of John, and been regarded as an indication of a craven and obsequious spirit, that he who unmasked so fearlessly the follies and vices of his hearers at the Jordan, should have passed unnoticed the scandalous conduct of Herod; he could have preserved his consistency, and at the same time censured his royal auditor in terms so feeble, that his words might have fallen as pointless arrows to the ground. He might have represented it as a failing or impropriety, at variance with the strict rules of morality, though more excusable in those whose elevated station exposes them to the seductive influences of temptation. But John thundered against it with the honest indignation of a virtuous mind. In glowing colors he painted its baseness in its reference to Philip his brother, the happiness of whose domestic circle he had ungenerously invaded; its flagrant criminality as a violation of the law of God; the injurious influence of his example upon the interests of public morals, and the

vengeance of Heaven that should assuredly await him in another world. Such faithful representations were exceedingly unwelcome to Herod, accustomed only to the language of flattery; and he ordered that John should be cast into prison. This has been often the treatment to which the faithful discharge of duty has subjected the people of God in this life. "Men hate the light because their deeds are evil." They love those who "prophesy to them smooth things," and encourage them in the prosecution of their sinful pleasures; while those on the contrary, who faithfully reprove them, are addressed in the language of the monarch to the prophet: "Get thee hence, for thou always speakest evil of me and not good." Had Herod listened to the counsels of John (instead of ungenerously casting him into prison), how edifying would have been his repentance, how different his condition for eternity! and even now who would not prefer the fate of John in his solitary prison, enjoying the sunshine of a serene conscience and the approbation of his God, to Herod in his magnificent palace, stained with the most odious vices, and execrated by the wisest and best of his subjects? There was one, however, whose rage had been still more powerfully enkindled, and who resolved that her victim should still more severely pay the forfeit of his temerity and insolence. This was Herodias, the guilty partner of Herod. It was not enough that he who was emphatically "a burning and shining light," and had devoted his eminent gifts to promote the reformation of his countrymen, should be now languishing within the walls of a prison, and arrested in his benevolent career of exertion; her malice would be satiated with nothing short of the death of her victim. It seems scarcely credible that she could have cherished the idea of such an infamous crime; yet the solution is to be found in the peculiar constitution of female character. Both the graces of her person and the retiring gentleness of her nature, enable woman to wield an

important influence over the moral and social condition of man. She strengthens the love of virtue, discountenances the progress of crime; so that, in every country where her proper sphere has been assigned to her, the beneficial influence of her example has been uniformly seen. In the shades of private life, she gives to every home the virtues which both guard and adorn it; and the tastes and amusements of society will be greatly modified according to the tone and standard of virtue which she exhibits. To enable her to sustain this important character, she is endowed by her Creator with a nice sense of propriety, a refined delicacy of feeling that recoils instinctively from the slightest infractions of pure and dignified sentiment; so that the sensitive plant does not more naturally shrink from the touch, than woman, with her elevated sense of propriety, from the contact of profligacy and crime. This is one of those wise preventive checks in her nature so necessary to secure the peace of families, and productive of the happiest results to the well being of society. But when she once oversteps these limits, her descent into the pollutions of vice will be rapid and desolating; for under the humiliating conviction of her fall, and the consciousness that she has forfeited the esteem of the wise and virtuous, she plunges with reckless fury into the vortex of ungodly pleasures, and becomes in the emphatic language of Scripture "earthly, sensual, devilish." There is a fervor in the female bosom which glows with the sacred claims of honor, and is tremblingly alive to the nicer susceptibilities of the heart; but whenever this flame burns on the altar of impure affection and is debased by the noxious atmosphere of guilt, the retiring gentleness of her nature is destroyed; the sacred boundaries of virtue once trespassed, are generally for ever abandoned, and a gulf, in most cases impassable, separates her from the blessings of religion, and the hope full of immortality. Herodias felt indignant at the faithful remonstrances of the Baptist. Wanting

the support of a good conscience, and knowing that she had forfeited the esteem of the virtuous class of the community, she resolved to overawe public opinion upon her conduct by the weight of her vengeance; and as John had exposed the vulnerable traits of her character, not in the bland language of the courtier, but in the stern and austere tones of a prophet, she calmly waited the opportunity, when no longer restrained by the fear of the Jews, she might safely instigate Herod to put him to a violent death.

Let us here pause, and contemplate John undergoing the punishment of a felon in a prison. He was the victim of foul injustice, of mean and contemptible oppression. Does he lament that his course of active labor is arrested, and that he is languishing within the walls of a dungeon? Does he regret the stern fidelity with which he reprimanded Herod, and employ easy conciliatory measures to soften his rage? Does he murmur at the Almighty in thus rewarding his services by exposing him to obloquy and reproach? No: the breast of John was filled with peace and holy confidence, his prison was to him the house of God; and if its doors should open to conduct him to a bloody grave, his spirit would wing its flight to the mansions of heavenly glory. "The fetters that I wear, are not the ignominious badges of disgrace; the religion for which I am now suffering, shall triumph over the malice of its enemies and the powers of hell. I know in whom I have believed; and though my body may be consumed at the stake, or pierced by the sword, my soul shall soar on eagles' wings above the sorrows of time, and be safe for ever in the bosom of my God."

Let us pass from the prison of John to the palace of Herod. It is his birthday. His court had been thronged during the day with senators, ambassadors, priests, and noble families in Judea; and in the evening he "made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief

estates of Galilee." (Mark 6 : 21.) The festival presented no doubt every feature of pomp and magnificence. The richest viands, the costliest wines, the rarest and most sumptuous articles of furniture, and apartments brilliantly illuminated, gratified the monarch, and tended to promote the gayety and entertainment of his guests. While the scene was at its height and the heart of the king "was merry within him," he ordered that the daughter of Herodias should come and dance before the assembly. A modest female would have shrunk from such a proposal, regarding compliance with it as unbefitting the delicacy of the sex. But we are not startled when we read that no scruples were felt on the present occasion; for the influence of such a mother, and the education which she would give to her daughter, (consisting only of showy and transient accomplishments, intended to impart symmetry and grace to the person and sprightly elegance and polish to the manners, instead of strengthening the faculties and inciting to the love of virtue,) would fit her for shining to the greatest advantage in such a gay assembly.

Her dancing pleased the whole court; and Herod was so delighted that he promised to give her whatever she should ask. This was the moment which Herodias had long ardently wished; for which she had plotted and manœuvred, expended all her ingenuity and influence, that she might hurl her deadliest vengeance on the head of the Baptist. Her toils were so completely around him, that escape was impossible. Accordingly, when her daughter returned and told of the unlimited offer of the king, she desired her to ask the head of John the Baptist. There was silence in the royal apartment when the daughter of Herodias entered. Not long had she been absent in consultation with her mother, at once her parent and counsellor in wickedness, and now she stands before the king to present her request. All the nobles and courtiers of Galilee bent forward in

eager expectation to catch the sound of her words, and learn in the object of her ambition, the bias of her youthful nature. She spoke, and her words as they fell upon the ear amid the profoundest silence, appalled the stoutest hearts; and even sent a pang of anguish into the heart of the monarch himself. He was now the unhappy victim of conflicting emotions. Pity whispered that the object of his resentment was a man of no common attainments and piety; and that if his interference was uncalled for, he had already suffered for it by a long imprisonment. Selfishness inculcated the impolicy of the measure, as the death of John might kindle the flames of a civil war in his province. Malice prompted him to embrace this opportunity of ridding himself of this troublesome censor. And pride asked if his royal promise and oath were to be set aside, and the daughter of a queen to be balked of her wishes, by the claims of an obnoxious individual.

The way in which Herod should have extricated himself out of the dilemma in which his rash promise had placed him is sufficiently obvious. His oath could extend only to objects over which he could claim the right of possession. But to Jehovah alone belong the issues of life and death, and therefore to sacrifice an innocent individual to the suggestions of a false honor, was a sin of the deepest dye. If it was wrong to have made such a promise, it was still more sinful to fulfil it. Would Herod, if his daughter had asked his own head, or that of one of his eminent courtiers, or had even insisted that the half of his kingdom should be given to her, have complied with her request? But his anger against the prophet, the fear of the upbraidings of Herodias, and false conceptions of his royal prerogative silenced the pleadings of justice, and the order was issued that John should be beheaded without the formality of a trial — without the least warning of his fate. At midnight, when the palace of Herod was in a blaze of

light and magnificence, the doors of the prison creak on their hinges as the rusty key of the jailer opens them; a flickering light is shed upon the gloomy walls, the Baptist is aroused from his sleep, the sword of the executioner promptly does its office, and his smoking head is brought to Herodias, that she might feast her eyes on the fall of her victim. Blessed martyr! how glorious the course thou didst run upon the earth! How faithful in labors, how inflexible in the midst of temptation! "Thou wast faithful unto the death, and hast received the crown of life." Thou wast summoned to leave a prison, for a heavenly kingdom, the imprecations of felons, for the society of the blessed and the songs of paradise, and looked back on the sufferings on earth, "as not worthy to be compared with the glory that is revealed."

History throws little subsequent light upon the guilty agents of this crime. The tradition that the daughter, in crossing a frozen lake, was killed by the ice giving way and severing her head from her body as she was sinking, is probably fabulous; nor shall we make any use of the disasters which afterwards befell Herod, in being expelled from his kingdom; for the principle of judging of the characters of men from the state of affluence or misery in which they live, and connecting signal calamities with the commission of particular sins, is both dangerous and unsound. There is one incident, however, to which we must advert. When the fame of our Saviour's miracles reached the ears of Herod, we read that he was perplexed, and said, "It is John whom I beheaded, he is risen from the dead." This was the testimony of an accusing conscience. The Supreme Being hath enthroned in the breasts of men this faculty, which acts with all the authority of a judge, and testifies both to the criminality of an action and the certainty of future punishment. No Delphic oracle is necessary to interpret its decisions. By no casuistry or long indulgence in vice can

its voice be altogether drowned. It embitters the cup of pleasure and haunts the dishonest in the gains of illicit traffic. The murderer flies from the society of his fellows, to escape the arm of justice; but there is a power that follows him from which it is impossible to escape. The image of his slaughtered victim presents itself in every step that he takes through the pathless forest; and ever and anon as he stops, the cry of unavenged blood moans in every gale that sighs through the trees, trembles in the rustling of every leaf, and is heard in the murmuring of every distant streamlet that falls on his ear. When Cain was arraigned before Jehovah for the murder of his brother, he exclaimed, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." A declaration that appears strange, after having been assured of impunity from the hand of man. Ah! he had that within him which surpassed the bitterness of all temporal punishment, and in the grave of Abel were entombed his peace and comfort of mind. He was now stretched on the rack of a guilty conscience, and felt the first gnawings of that worm that never dies. Judas also, who betrayed our Saviour, was afterwards filled with dismay at his conduct. And why need he feel so?—he had committed a meritorious action in the eyes of his countrymen, and he was liberally rewarded for it from the coffers of the treasury. There was blood on his hands that all the waters of Jordan could not wash away, and he sought a relief from the agonies of an accusing mind by an ignominious death. From the searching scrutiny and terrible reprisals of this internal accuser, neither Herod, nor his associates in the murder of John were ever exempt. They might try to silence its voice in a succession of frivolous amusements and sinful pleasures, but it could not be entirely repressed. There were moments when it would pursue them to the pillow of sleep, and haunt them like a ghost in the stillness of solitude, and teach them how dearly purchased are the pleasures of sin, when accompanied by those

paroxysms of remorse, which bite like a serpent and sting like an adder. Thus God punishes the wicked even in this present life, for the violation of his law, and gives them a foretaste of their condemnation hereafter in an endless scene of punishment.

The narrative which we have thus briefly sketched, teaches us some important lessons:

How scrupulously should we avoid the commission of sin when we contemplate its progressive character. The base conduct of Herod in the matter of Herodias, led to the murder of John, and many other scandalous acts of his reign. If we would escape the remoter consequences of sin, let us watch over its incipient stages. Avoid the very appearance of evil. He that walketh in the counsel of the ungodly, will speedily stand in the way of sinners, until having drowned the convictions of conscience and renounced the obligations of religion, he finally sits down in the seat of the scornful.

How tenderly should we cherish the convictions of conscience. Had Herod followed up the impression produced upon his heart by the faithful ministry of John, he would have resembled David in the depth of his penitence, and his anxiety, as far as possible to repair the wrongs which he had inflicted. But instead of profiting by the voice of instruction, as David did under the faithful appeals of Nathan, Herod resents the interference of John, though he had invited him to address him, and finally, after a long imprisonment, consents that he should be put to death. Let this incident teach us the danger of trifling with the convictions of conscience. He who stifles, or wishes to repress its salutary voice, is only strengthening the vicious principles of his nature, and may come to commit those sins at which he would formerly have shrunk back in abhorrence.

How preferable the state of the most abject Christian on earth to that of the most prosperous sinner. John in his solitary prison, with

the testimony of a good conscience, and the smile of an approving Heaven, is more an object of respect than Herod amid the pageantry of a throne, the slave of his vicious passions, and constantly agonized by the upbraiding disquietude of an unpurified conscience. And if thus superior in time, O how much more when viewed in the light of eternity! "I have seen the wicked in great power, spreading himself like a green bay-tree, yet he passed away, and lo! he was not. Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace."

C. Staal. B. Eyles.

The Wife of the Levite of Ephraim

New-York. D. Appleton & Cº 200 Broadway.

THE LEVITE'S WIFE.

BY N. S. S. BEMAN, D. D.

THE biography of this unfortunate woman presents a bloody page in the history of Israel. It was a fearful age, which is generally true of every one that immediately succeeds protracted and sanguinary wars. The nation had been trained to arms. Their good old captain and patriarch, Joshua, had gone to rest. He was "like a shock of corn fully ripe." And, though he had not long ceased from the living, a scene of desolation already spread over the mountains and stretched along the valleys of the Holy Land. The Church and the State had kept pace with each other in the downward road. We read of but three Levites in the whole Book of Judges. Phineas was high priest, and we find him at his post in a trying national emergency, which grew out of the story we have commenced. A second was an ecclesiastical vagrant, from the same city which gave birth to the unhappy subject of this memoir,—who emigrated to Mount Ephraim, to get his bread, sold himself for a paltry sum to Micah, and who, together with Micah and his mother and their "house of gods," goes to make up a rare assemblage,—a man, who, ever true to his one master-passion, his own interest, deserted his employer, robbed him

of his idols, joined a roving band who had sallied forth for conquest and spoil, and was instrumental in introducing image-worship into Dan. Though notorious to a proverb, he appears in the sacred history without a *name*, and died without a record, and was buried without an epitaph. The story of the only remaining Levite alluded to in the Book of Judges, is intimately blended with our present narrative. These facts may throw some light on the state of religion and morals, in Israel, at that period to which this sketch belongs.

Nor were the affairs of the State under any better regulation. "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes." They were not only destitute of the regal form of government, — which was an invention of a later period in Israel, — but they had no magistrate, no civil government. Every man was his own lawgiver and judge; and anarchy, wide-spread and withering, covered the land. Property, reputation, virtue, life, were all equally insecure. The temptation and the opportunity were all that were needed; and every thing that is lovely in the eye of Heaven, — all that is cherished in the more hallowed scenes of home, — all that sweetens social life, and brings man into communion with a purer world, — all that renders earth charming, or desirable, or even tolerable, withers in the grasp of lawless passion. Our story is a leaf cut out of the history of such an age as this; and, taken as a specimen-production, it is probably not a bad one.

The incidents of this whole affair are recorded with a degree of minuteness not common in cases of this kind, no doubt as a warning against those obliquities of life which drew down upon the guilty agents the chastizing hand of Heaven. More fearful events, or in greater numbers, are nowhere crowded together on a few brief pages in the records of man. The divine historian presents the simple, though dark picture as the scenes occur, and leaves the moral lessons

to be drawn from them to the instinctive promptings of the spirit which dwells within us. The facts of the record, preach the sermon; and thought, by its own living power, makes the application. But the story itself should be told, for it is more spirit-stirring than any fine speculations of philosophy, or cool deductions of morals.

In the days of the Judges,—and even these magistrates were rather nominal than real at this particular juncture,—an obscure Levite who dwelt in rural retirement upon "the sides of Mount Ephraim,"—the home of the vine, and the pomegranate, and the olive,—formed an attachment for a fair daughter of a citizen of Bethlehem-Judah. Their education, and associations, and habits of life were, no doubt, very different, and ill-adapted to each other. He had been reared in comparative obscurity, had been accustomed to climb the mountain acclivities, had subsisted on bread and fruits, had quenched his thirst at the cool bubbling spring that gushed up in living freshness from the earth; and his cheek was browned by morning exercise, as the early visitations of the sunlight came over from the east upon his wild abode. He went down into the wealthy and luxurious valley of Bethlehem-Judah, and there selected a companion of the more polished and less religious daughters of that city. A kind and confiding heart beat in his generous bosom; and this Jewish maid was probably young, sprightly and gay; and perhaps she added to the attractions which are associated with these epithets, beauty of form and face, and those accomplishments which belonged, in that day, to fashionable city life. She may have led the giddy dance, and sought and found her happiness in other youthful sports. Her heart, we may believe, was wholly upon the present enchanting scene,—its breathings had never gone upwards, much less had they ever reached heaven. She was ill adapted to become the wife of a Levite. But the eye of the mountaineer ensnared his heart,

and the gay daughter of the Bethlehemite became the affianced of this inexperienced adventurer. It was lawful for a Levite to marry a daughter of Judah,—that is, to marry one of another tribe, provided she was not an heiress. The father was probably poor, and the daughter proud and aspiring. She became the wife of the Levite. She is so called in the *margin*, though the term "concubine" is inserted in the text. She was "a lawful wife, though not wedded with all the forms and ceremonies of the Jewish ritual." She was "a wife without a dowry."

In due time, the Levite took his bride to his mountain home. But it proved an unhappy union. This exotic, transplanted from the vale to the rugged mountain's side, did not find a genial soil and clime. She was not satisfied with her new home, and became alienated from her new protector. An old and quaint writer has remarked,—"She came from the same city Micah's Levite came from, as if Bethlehem-Judah owed a double ill to Mount Ephraim; for she was as bad for a Levite's wife, as *he* for a Levite." Her husband's pursuits may have been too retired and grave, his habits too rustic, and his manner of living too simple and unpretending to gratify her taste, or fulfil her cherished anticipations. Whatever the cause may have been, true it is, she stepped aside from the right and safe path, and by a single act poisoned for ever the fountain of domestic peace. Different opinions have been entertained as to the precise nature of her offence. It may have been rashness, or it may have been crime.

Our translation assumes the latter ground. It represents her as guilty of infidelity to her husband. The vow of devotion was set at nought, and given to the winds. She had met temptations in the retired and rural scenes of Mount Ephraim. The serpent crossed her path in the smooth and subtle form of the seducer, and the strength of principle was insufficient to meet the conflict with honor, and come

out of it—wearing a myrtle wreath around a victor's brow. She fell. Her education and habits had more of the soft and luxurious, than of the stern and unyielding; and she became the prey of influences which had, peradventure, been long at work,—of former slight and specious indulgencies which had failed perhaps to offend her delicacy, or alarm her fears. Sin is small in its beginnings. The Hebrew sage has said, it is only "the thought of foolishness." But once admitted and sanctioned, its progress is often rapid,—it expands in words and deeds, and the whispers of "the closet" become the proclamations of "the house top." This misguided woman, if this *was* her crime, awoke from her delusions, and fled from her dishonored home, in order to avoid her husband's upbraiding eye, or the reproach and scorn of an outraged community, or the penalty of death awarded to the adulteress by the law of Moses.

But it is thought by many, that the offence of this woman against her husband, was of a very different character,—far less deeply marked with guilt than that of conjugal infidelity. The Chaldee reads, "She carried it insolently towards him, or despised him." The Seventy and Josephus concur in this reading. Several modern commentators of illustrious name, have favored this construction. And is not this the more rational opinion? If she had fallen so low as to commit a crime for which an infamous death was inflicted by the law, we could not well account for the continued attachment and subsequent conduct of the husband.

Let us not, however, for mere theories, or even exegesis, lose sight of our story. This young woman became an unamiable and an unquiet wife. The honey-moon was followed by a sting. She became insolent to her husband; and, having exhausted her bad passions on him, deserted a habitation which she had made any thing but a *home*, and, for the sake of enjoying greater freedom, retired to her fathers'

house. Here she was received, and entertained for "four whole months,"—though from what motives, on the part of the father, does not appear in the narrative. Whatever may have been the nature of her offence, whether it was infidelity to her husband, the stain of which even the stream of time, that, in its perpetual flow, changes almost every thing, never washes out from the character of a wife; or whether it was made up of oft-repeated acts of irritation—numberless and nameless—true it is, she was an unquiet spirit. Her husband is wantonly deserted upon Mount Ephraim, and this young bride is once more in her father's house at Bethlehem-Judah! And the fault was all her own. Here she seems to have been welcomed, and treated kindly. It may be that her father had not heard at all of her domestic troubles, of her own bearings as a wife, or of her desertion of her husband. Those were not the days of well-constructed roads, much less of railways and electro-magnetic telegraphs. The iron-horse feeding on flame, and the iron-pavement forming his foot-course, had never been dreamed of; and the magic wires on which the lightning travels, as if endowed with thought, annihilating time and space, had not even an embryo being in the anticipations of the most enthusiastic progressive. Near neighbors often lived and died ignorant of each other. This woman too had the advantage of telling her own story; and if her failings had been hinted at,—or her dishonored home,—either by father or daughter, the most favorable construction was, no doubt, put on her conduct. She may have been spoiled in her childhood, and such never fail of having their own way in after life. Father, mother, brother, sister, husband, may stand up in their way in vain,—their course is right onward. A petted female beauty is sure to pay back, in the days of mature folly, to *somebody*, insolence for all the adulations which have been lavished upon her in infancy. This misguided woman may have been of this class; for

such have been found in every country, and in all ages. Possibly her mother,—that best friend of our early days, whose voice is so soothing and so subduing, whose soft hand heals the very wound it inflicts by way of correction; and who, as she clasps the little offender to her warm bosom, both punishing and restoring by the same act, breathes her own blessed spirit through all the inner sanctuary, and over the quickening germ of immortality which lies concealed in these deep chambers—this *mother-friend* may have long since ceased from the living, and rested with the dead. Like Rachel, whose grave and monument were near by, she may have died young, and left an infant to grow up, and struggle through life, as best it might, without a mother's caresses, and tears, and prayers.

Her motives in taking refuge in her father's house may have been various. It was the home of her infancy and childhood, and it would have its sweet associations ever; or she might here again enjoy freedom from all control, and do as she pleased, and gratify her own caprices; or she might hope, in this seclusion, to find a shelter from that storm which she had created for herself, and be veiled from the reproachful, or the scornful gaze of those who had been wounded by her fall, or who had gloried in that event. She remained here "four months," perhaps a self-imprisoned victim,—probably knowing and caring little about the world, and the world quite as indifferent about her. Her love for her husband, if she ever had any, was extinguished. This anchor of the married woman, that secures her from dangers in the darkest night of peril,—in the most fearful ocean-storms,—had been torn away. She had drifted from her haven, and had become a wreck.

But there is one heart which goes out in kindness after this poor fugitive from her own appropriate resting-place. The Levite of the mountain can overlook her follies and her faults,—whatever they

may have been,—though he himself had been the chief sufferer—if affairs may be reconciled, and she again return to her position and duties as a wife. His purpose was no sooner formed, than he set himself about its execution, for love is prompt to act. He took his servant and two asses, and set his face towards Bethlehem-Judah. On his arrival he was kindly received, both by father and daughter, and must have found himself quite at home. His determination to depart and seek again his own residence was overcome, day by day, by the importunity of his father-in-law and his generous and cheerful hospitality, till the afternoon of the fifth day, when his purpose became too strong to be changed. This proved an unfortunate moment for all concerned; for had he commenced his journey in the morning, the evening might have welcomed him home. But such was not the purpose of God. He had a testimony to bear, in these matters, for which things are ripening fast. These three shall never meet again. "For the transition," as one has said, "from the house of joy to the house of mourning, is but from one room to another." After a ride of about six miles, they arrived over against the ancient Jebus, afterwards Jerusalem, and it became apparent that they must soon seek a shelter for the night. The servant counselled to apply for lodgings to the Jebusites; but his master declined on the ground that they were strangers and aliens, and he would prefer entertainment among his own people. By the time they came to Gibeah, belonging to Benjamin, "the sun went down upon them;" and, when they alighted in the streets, no door of hospitality was open to bid them welcome. They might have shared better among the heathen.

Here they purposed to spend the night; but an old man came from his work in the field, at evening, himself from Mount Ephraim, and was attracted by the appearance of these strangers in the streets. Their greetings were brief, and an acquaintance was soon formed.

They were prepared to sympathize in relation to the want of hospitality in Gibeah. It was not for the lack of means. Its citizens lived in luxury. Their storehouses and cellars were filled with abundance; and yet, contrary to the kind usages of the day, these benighted travellers are permitted to take up their lodgings in the open air. There are indications of character here which we must not forget; for they stand connected with fearful, and not far distant events. The generous old man made their wants his own, brought them into his habitation, furnished cool water for their feet, and spread a suitable repast for their entertainment. Their hearts were merry. They enjoyed this social interview. They were happy. They experienced what Nature's poet has long since that period made immortal in his verse,—for the truth here embodied is older than the art of writing,—it is coeval with social man:

> "The quality of mercy is not strained;
> It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
> Upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed;
> It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes."

But while all is sunshine and joy within, a death-storm is brewing without.

The "sons of Belial" are assembled. These men cannot well be described. It almost makes us blush to think we belong to the same race with them. One has said they were "worse than beasts, being a compound of beast and devil inseparably blended." They burn with lust; they thirst for blood! They threaten the life of the Levite, and they are appeased only by the surrender of his wife to their disposal. But the scenes of that dark night are not fully written. The divine pen has forbore the task. They cannot be painted. The dyes must

come from a deeper world than this, — farther removed from the sweet light of heaven, — in order to carry with them a due expressiveness. And the ARTIST, — who should he be? Angel, or "archangel ruined?" Whence should we evoke him? From above, or from below? But God drew, with his own hand, the pall of night over these scenes, in some respects worse than infernal. But the morning discloses the results. As the early dayspring visits our world, all is still in Gibeah. The noise and riot, and oaths and threats of blood, which made the darkness appear more dread, have passed away, and the brutal actors in these horrid scenes have gone, like beasts of prey, to their dens. To such daylight is odious. But glance your eye towards the humble dwelling of the good old man, from Mount Ephraim, who opened his door of hospitality to the Levite and his wife, who, overtaken by the nightfall, had encamped in the streets for want of better accommodations. It is now early dawn, the sweetest hour in all the day, in oriental climes. The east begins to glow with a mellow light, and a few herald beams have spread a golden hue upon the mountain-tops. But at that door — what do you see? Surely it is not for plain prose to tell. Nor yet for poetry. It is a subject for the PENCIL. The eye of the artist seizes the "tout ensemble" at a glance, and if nature should have failed in any delicacy or adjustment, imagination promptly supplies the defect. Do you ask who this female is? You know her. It is the youthful wife of the Levite of Mount Ephraim. Her hands rest on that threshold which she attempted to attain with her feet. She hoped once more to cross that threshold and meet her husband, whose life had been purchased by her disgrace. But it was all in vain! She fainted, and fell never to rise again. The eye is not closed, — but it *is closing*, in death. The warm glow of life has just begun to recede from the cheek, and the pale king has commenced the work of imparting his own hue, and thus painting her as the

future inmate of his own chambers. And this is the death-scene of the bride of Bethlehem-Judah!

But what were the feelings of the Levite, when, a moment after, he opened the door, and found his wife dead? She is a murdered woman. He felt it in deep agony, as the sequel discloses. She is murdered too, not by Pagans, the devotees of dumb idols,—this might have been some alleviation; but she is murdered, with attendant acts of nameless brutality, by the children of faithful Abraham,—by their brother Benjamin. He lays her upon his ass, and, with his servant, makes his way home to Mount Ephraim, with a heavy heart. But who shall tell his frantic grief, when he performed the dreadful deeds that followed. With his own hand he took a knife and divided her into "twelve parts, and sent her into all the coasts of Israel." The object was to arouse the nation in view of the horrid crimes of Gibeah. And the measure was effectual, for all that saw it said, "There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt unto this day." The tribes were assembled at Mispeh,—"four hundred thousand footmen that drew the sword." The bereaved Levite addressed the assembly, giving a simple and touching recital of events which had occurred on that dark and memorable night in Gibeah; and the appeal was thrilling. But one heart beat in the bosoms of this vast multitude; and they resolved neither to go to their tents nor their homes, till these bloody deeds were avenged. It is certainly very creditable to Israel, that in that dark age, and under these strongly exciting causes, they made a fair proposal to that wicked city. They would refrain from all hostile acts, if Gibeah would deliver up "the children of Belial," who had done these deeds, that they might be punished by death, and thus "put away evil from Israel." This reasonable request was rejected, and there remained no alternative.

The law must be honored. Public justice must be vindicated. The character of Abraham's God is at stake, — and the conflict of battle came. The struggle was fearful. On both sides, in a few days, more than forty-five thousand trained warriors fell upon the field; and a promiscuous slaughter of men, women, and children, and even beasts, followed in Benjamin, till this tribe was well nigh exterminated.

But the sequel we canot pursue in detail. It seemed necessary to glance at these events, in order to discover more clearly the divine purpose in placing the biography of this woman upon the pages of his own book. It stands there as a beacon-light, streaming far over the ocean-wave of life, telling where the headlands appear, disclosing the hidden rocks where many a gallant bark has been stranded, or the quicksands, where many a warm-hearted, but inexperienced rover of the deep, has gone down, in some fearful night, to be seen no more. This little page of domestic life is intended to teach us what some very good Christians overlook, — the doctrine of earthly retribution. Not such a retribution as supersedes the necessity of one in the future, but such a one as must establish the fact, that a day of full and final reckoning will come. The partial, though still appalling achievements of sin in the bitter fruits of suffering here, are so many divine intimations of what it will do hereafter, when it shall cease to be modified by probation, and restraining mercy shall give up her control. No one can contemplate such events as are here spread out before us, without being prepared to say, "Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth." This great truth stands here recorded in the handwriting of God; it is attested by the seal and signature of the Unchangeable. How fearful is the Almighty, when he comes out of his holy place to punish guilty individuals, or guilty nations!

Nor can we fail to see in the record of these events the great end of all human training and all self-discipline. It is to bring the

passions under the control of reason and religion. Upon the subjected spirit you may ingraft every virtue and every grace; and flowers and fruits, in mingled richness and beauty, may be seen to cluster on all the future branches. But self-will and self-indulgence are the harbingers of ruin. Evil passions, if cherished, will soon become the active elements of mischief,—they will be braided into a whip of scorpions, with which we shall scourge ourselves and others. We have, in this Bible story, the fully developed picture of which the heaven-instructed James has spoken. We have the inception, the progress, the end of moral evil. "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

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The Woman of Samaria.

New-York. D. Appleton & Cº 200 Broadway.

WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

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In the life of Him who was God as well as man, who, having inhabited the praises of eternity, laid aside his glory, and condescended for a season to tabernacle in poverty and sorrow upon earth, — no fact is unimportant. On the contrary, every event related in the brief history of his temporary sojourn amongst men is worthy of serious regard, as having a bearing, directly or remotely, upon the great end of his Incarnation.

An illustration of this general remark, may be found in that simple narrative of an incidental interview between Jesus and a poor Samaritan woman, recorded in the fourth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John. The circumstances, separately considered, were trifling and unimportant; yet, like the finer touches of the pencil in a landscape, each one is essential to the perfection of the picture; and the whole, combined, presents a subject worthy of our most profound reflection, and pregnant with high results in reference to the character of our Lord, the destiny of the poor woman herself, and the salvation of her countrymen.

In the brief space allotted to the present article we cannot bring

out, in its fulness, all the teaching contained in this part of the inspired pages; yet, as we know nothing of the history of the Samaritan woman, except what is contained in a brief chapter of the sacred volume, we must glance at the leading incidents recorded, or we shall fail to give any thing like completeness to the sketch which we stand pledged to attempt.

The Evangelist informs us that our Lord, being at Jerusalem, purposing to return to Galilee, where he had been brought up, "must needs go through Samaria." For this necessity there was a geographical reason, because Samaria lay at the north of Judea, between it and Galilee. There was also, we may believe, a providential reason, arising from his gracious purpose to change the character of a sinful woman, and through her, to impart the light of truth to many of her ignorant neighbors and acquaintances. The province of Samaria was originally inhabited by the Cuthites. Its chief city, one of great beauty and strength, was built in the days of Omri, whose reign commenced about one thousand years before Christ. Although built upon a hill, it was abundantly supplied with water, and had command of every thing which could minister to the temporal comfort and enjoyment of its inhabitants. We may form some idea of their excessive refinement and luxury, and of the injustice and oppression by which their sensual indulgences were sustained, from the language in which God's judgments against them were pronounced: "I will smite the *winter-house* with the *summer-house*, and the *houses of ivory* shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the Lord. Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which *oppress the poor*, which *crush the needy*, which say to their masters, bring, and let us drink."*

* Amos iii. 15, and iv. 1, 2.

But what invests Samaria with its chief interest to the biblical reader is, that it was the chosen abode of the ten tribes who revolted and formed a separate kingdom under Jeroboam. "Only the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained subject to the house of David, and formed the kingdom of Judah, while the ten rebellious tribes styled themselves the kingdom of Israel. The kings of Judah, who possessed the south of the promised land, resided at Jerusalem on Mount Zion. The kingdom of Israel comprised all the northern districts, and its royal residence was first the fortified hill of Thirza, and afterwards the city of Samaria. The two kingdoms were almost at perpetual war with each other. But a worse evil was their intestine disorder. Jeroboam began his reign by introducing from political motives, a new *idolatry*. He was apprehensive that if the people continued in connection with the Temple and worship of God, at Jerusalem, they would gradually fall away from him again, and return under the dominion of the house of David. He therefore made an imitation of the golden cherubim of the Temple, transferred some of the festivals to other seasons, and chose priests out of all the tribes of the people at his own pleasure, without restriction to the tribe of Levi. This unlawful and schismatical worship became open idolatry, when, in the year 900 before the birth of Christ, king Ahab ascended the throne of Israel. Then it was, at the instigation of his wife Jezebel, that ungodly woman of Sidon, that the worship of Baal became the established religion of the country, and the worshippers of the true God were persecuted with fire and sword."

But before the days of our Saviour, indeed as far back as the days of Esar-haddon, the Samaritans had been reclaimed from their gross idolatries, returned to the irregular and corrupt worship of the true God, reverenced the Pentateuch as of divine origin, professed to be governed by the law of Moses, and falsely claimed the privileges and

distinctions which belonged to the descendants of the fathers of the Jewish nation. Hence this woman, in her interview with Christ, boasted that Abraham and the Patriarchs had worshipped upon Mount Gerizim; and in proof of the fact, referred to the well of Jacob, by which they were then standing. Hence, too, our Lord does not so much charge upon this woman and the Samaritans generally, the gross sin of worshipping idols, as the guilt of professedly worshipping Jehovah in ignorance of his true character and promises; and in places, and by means unsanctioned by his authority.

The fact that the religion of the Samaritans was corrupted Judaism, and that, while they rejected some of the peculiar institutions of the chosen people, they professed to be governed by the law, and laid claim to the promises made to the fathers, will account for the peculiar bitter aversion which existed between the two races. The Jews looked with more abhorrence upon a Samaritan, than they did upon an avowed heathen. They would have "no dealings" with him, even in the way of ordinary traffic, without great necessity; much less any friendly intercourse in the bland courtesies and tender charities of life.

But Jesus, our Master, was thrown into close association and familiar conference with one of a race most hated by his countrymen. His efforts, during the brief interview, were put forth to remove the prejudices and soften the asperities which existed between the two hostile races; and to prepare the way, not only for their reconciliation, but for their being made one in him. Having travelled about a day's journey from Jerusalem, and arrived in the vicinity of Sychem, or Sychar, a city of Samaria: being as a man liable not only to weariness and fatigue, but also to hunger and thirst,—oppressed and exhausted with his toilsome journey, he seated himself by the well of Jacob, where water was to be obtained; and sent his

disciples into the neighboring city, to procure food. While thus reposing by the well, he saw a woman come thither to draw water; and he "saith unto her, give me to drink."

Let us draw near to that "well of our father Jacob," and listen to the interesting conversation which took place between this strange woman and Him who spake as never man spake. Let us do it with a reverent spirit, that we may be refreshed by our approach to the living fountain, and with joy "draw water from the well of Salvation."

The first lesson which we learn from this memorable conference, relates to the superhuman nature and the divine power of our Lord Jesus Christ. He sat by the well, oppressed with the heat of the day and wearied with the fatigues of his journey. There was nothing in his appearance to indicate his higher nature, or to distinguish him from ordinary foot travellers. And, therefore, his request for a draught of water, called forth a reply indicative only of surprise and censure. The woman said, "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me which am a woman of Samaria?" But how must her surprise have been magnified when she heard his mysterious reply: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." The woman, with her carnal views, could form no proper conception of the meaning of his reply. She thought only of the living waters bubbling from the deep hidden fountain of the well; and, therefore, referred to its great depth, and to the fact of his having no vessel which could reach it. Yet she seems to have conjectured that there might be some other and higher meaning in his words, and accordingly inquired, Whether he was to be considered as any other than he appeared; whether he claimed to be "greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank

thereof himself, and his children and his cattle?" Jesus had no wish to lessen her good opinion of the pure nature and the refreshing properties of the water of that ancient well, but proceeded to show the wide difference between it and the water of which he spake. "Whosoever drinketh of this water, shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

We, who have access to the Scriptures of the New Testament, as well as the Old, can be at no loss as to the meaning of our Saviour's words. He had before spoken of himself as "the Gift of God," the Messiah promised to the fathers, predicted by the prophets, and foreshadowed in the sacrifices of the Law: the great, the unspeakable gift of Heaven to a sinful world. He now speaks of that other gift which was the leading promise of his own personal ministry,—the Holy Ghost, the comforter,—which they that believe in him should receive. The Spirit is often spoken of by the inspired writers under the emblem of living water. His influence is beautifully illustrated by the cleansing and refreshing properties of that element. As defilement is removed by the application of water, so is the pollution of the soul washed away by the grace of the Spirit. As the bud expands, and the flower sheds forth its fragrance, and the fruit ripens under the gentle dews and showers; so the graces of the soul, the virtues of the character, the holy duties of the Christian life derive beauty, and strength, and maturity from those influences of the Holy Spirit which descend upon us like dews upon the hill of Hermon, or like showers which water the earth. As after the genial visitations of the rain from heaven, the field, which was before parched and withered, appears clothed with verdure and laughs for joy; so the barren and desolate heart, burnt over as it were, by the fires of

affliction, becomes cheerful and jubilant under the refreshing and consolatory operations of grace from on high. The fountain of divine influence, opened by the Redeemer, is overflowing; and "whosoever will, may come and take the waters of life freely." Yet, alas! how few are there who comply with the gracious invitations of the Gospel! How few earnestly pray for that Holy Spirit which our Heavenly Father declares himself more ready to bestow than affectionate parents are to give good gifts to their children! How small a number are punctual attendants upon those sacraments and ordinances of the Church, which are not only seals of grace and pledges of salvation, but also conduits through which the water of life flows in upon the souls of devout recipients!

The great majority turn away from the living fountain, and vainly try to slake their immortal thirst at the "broken cisterns" of the world "which can hold no water." "The world can never give the bliss for which we sigh." It promises but to deceive; it allures only to destroy. Its riches take to themselves wings and fly away. The fullest indulgence in its pleasures is followed with the bitterest disappointment. Those who have attained its highest honors and worn its brightest diadems, as they gaze upon the fading glories of ambition, are forced to exclaim "vanity of vanities,—all is vanity."

"He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again." There is nothing in the possessions or enjoyments of the world that can satisfy the wants of an immortal spirit. Whatever amount of success may have crowned our efforts in the pursuit of earthly honor or wealth, to whatever degree our indulgence in sensual pleasure may have been carried,—there is still a feeling of bitter disappointment; a conscious vacancy and inanition of mind; "an aching void the world can never fill." Many of the readers of these pages have doubtless often made these profitless experiments, and wearied themselves in these

exhausting efforts to find abiding happiness in those things where it never has been, and never can be, found. Would that we could wean them from those "lying vanities," and persuade them to come to the fountain of that water which is always refreshing, always satisfying, because it springs up unto everlasting life! O that all would offer the prayer of the Samaritan woman; using her words in a higher sense than she attached to them: "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not!"

The views of this poor woman were altogether carnal and earthly. Although, like some wicked people, willing to engage in religious controversy about the circumstantials of religion, she had no right conception of its essentials. Like some in our day, who are forward to contend for the peculiarities of the sect with which they have an hereditary or educational connection, while utterly ignorant of the fundamental verities of the Catholic faith, she was ready to become the champion of the peculiarities of the Samaritans in opposition to the usages of the Jews, though blind to all that is essential in the faith and practice of a true servant of God. She had no just comprehension of the meaning of our Saviour's words, and no preparation of heart for the reception of the blessings which he came to bestow upon mankind.

It was necessary that she should know herself before she could become wise unto salvation. Our Lord, therefore, proceeded to prepare her for the reception of the saving knowledge of the truth, by revealing to her the secrets of her own heart and life, and by calling her transgressions to remembrance.

He said to her, "Go call thy husband." To which, as if unconscious of the gross wickedness of the guilty state in which she was living,—she replied, "I have no husband." "Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband; for thou hast had five

husbands, and he whom thou now hast, is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly." What must have been her amazement to find that this stranger—this plain wayfaring man,—was thus intimately acquainted with all the supposed secrets of her guilt, and had thus, in a single sentence, revealed the iniquity of her life! Filled with wonder, she acknowledged him to be a Prophet. But, desirous of relieving her mind from unpleasant reflection, and of suppressing that consciousness of guilt which the Master's reproof had awakened, she instantly sought refuge in controversy, and wished to engage him in a dispute as to the respective claims of Mount Gerizim and Mount Zion to be the only place of offering acceptable worship to Jehovah. Our Saviour, intent upon the execution of his purpose of mercy to this sinful soul, was not thus to be diverted from it. With great solemnity he reminded her, that although such questions might have seemed important once, they were so no more. "Believe me," said he, "the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth."

The woman then professed her faith in the Messiah that was to come, and who should teach them all things. Upon this, Jesus, who had studiously refrained from making known his Messiahship to the Jews, fully proclaimed the fact to this poor sinful woman of Samaria. "Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am He."

It is fair to presume that in this brief narrative, somewhat minute though it be, there is not a record of all the particulars which occurred in that momentous interview. We may suppose that our Saviour referred to many private incidents in the life of this woman, affording, even to her darkened mind, clear demonstration of her corruption and guilt; that by the influence of his grace she became possessed of an

humble and contrite heart, and was inspired with lively faith in him as the promised Messiah, the only Saviour of the world. All this seems to be implied in her address to the citizens of Samaria: "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" These words are indicative of a penitent and believing heart. Her conversion is further manifest from her anxiety to make known the glory of Jesus to her friends and neighbors, and persuade them also to believe in and follow him.

The character of this woman was libidinous, and the habits of her life had been criminal. Yet, like Mary Magdalene, the poor woman of Canaan, and the sinful woman who washed the Master's feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head, we believe she became the subject of his pardoning mercy and renewing grace.

The proud Pharisees censured Jesus for conversing with publicans and sinners. And many, bearing the Christian name, are surprised that he was so condescending and tender in his regards for some of the most unworthy, and selected some of the vilest of the vile to be the recipients of his grace, while many of the more moral and decent were left to perish in ignorance and sin. It would be a sufficient answer to these scruples of unbelief, to quote the words of Jesus in reference to a like objection to the will and procedure of the Eternal Father in a case almost precisely similar: "Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in thy sight." But we think we can perceive in his condescending mercy to some flagrant transgressors, a clear proof of the pure benevolence of his divine mission, and an affecting illustration of the fundamental truth that salvation is by grace. "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." He came to seek and to save that which was lost. The "faithful saying, worthy of all acceptation," which it is the grand design of the Gospel to

announce, is, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom adds St. Paul, "I am chief." None but those who acknowledge and feel their own sinfulness are meet recipients for the blessings of Christianity. For want of this, the Pharisees rejected Christ; for want of this, the proud and self-righteous in every age have rejected him.

It may be that some of the fair readers of these pages, of spotless reputation, enjoying the applause and admiration of the world, and exulting in the attentions and caresses of the highest circles of society, may be indulging self-complacent reflections upon their freedom from open viciousness of life, and proudly thanking God that they are not like this poor sinful woman of Samaria. Let them remember that "pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." The sins of the most degraded of our race show what human nature is capable of, and the extent of evil to which it would carry us all if left to follow its unrestrained propensities. In every unrenewed heart may be found the root of that tree which has produced the deadliest fruit. Our readers may be exempt from all degrading vices; they may never have stained the bridal robe, or been guilty of any violation of connubial rights; they may never have stooped to vicious associations in the pursuit of admiration, and, in the whirl of earthly amusement and sensuous pleasure, they may have kept within the prescribed limits of innocent indulgence. But dare they set up a plea to innocence and purity in the presence of that Holy One in whose sight the heavens are not clean? Ah! when the piercing eye of Him who told the Samaritan woman all things that ever she did is fixed upon their characters, how much does it behold that is worthy of abhorrence, and makes them liable to the severest sentence of that law which requires perfection in thought, word, and deed! If the Omniscient Saviour should expose to view all the secret records of their past

lives; if he should rescue from oblivion and hold out to the public gaze,—as he will one day do,—every lascivious look, every impure feeling, every inordinate affection, unruly desire, and unhallowed thought; if he should bring up from the deep recesses of treacherous memory the shades of proud, vain, envious, unhallowed emotions, followed by the ghosts of broken vows, murdered hours, profaned Sabbaths, neglected sermons, and abused means of grace,—O! how would every face be suffused with blushes and covered with confusion! How would every heart and voice be filled with confessions, wailings, lamentations, and cries for mercy! How much better to do this now, than amidst the terrors and despair of the last day, to cry, "Rocks, fall on us; and mountains, cover us; and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?"

We do not deny that there are gradations of guilt, and that some human beings are much more polluted by sin than others. But we do insist that all have sinned; and that the least guilty can be saved in no other way than the guiltiest may be: that is, by grace through faith in the merit of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the most moral and virtuous amongst us, no other terms of salvation have been provided than those which were made known to the Samaritan woman. We, like her, must have our own personal faults made known to us by the word and grace of Jesus Christ, and be so convinced of our sinfulness as truly to repent of and forsake it. We, like her, must acknowledge the divine character and Messiahship of the Lord Jesus, and rely on him as the only Saviour of the world. We, like her, must pray for and receive the Holy Spirit, if we would have within us that "well of living water which springeth unto everlasting life." Vain will be all our zeal for the doctrines and usages of particular

sects,—vain our attachment to our favorite places and modes of worship, unless we fervently "worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

Have we been brought to the knowledge of the true Messiah? have we found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write? Let us imitate the example of the Samaritan woman. In the overflowings of a believing and grateful heart, she proclaimed the glory of Jesus, and used her utmost efforts to bring her friends and neighbors to the knowledge of him who told her all things that ever she did. She was the first witness for the Gospel in that benighted city of her nativity, and probably prepared the way for the successful preaching of Philip the Deacon, and for the confirming ministry of the Apostles Peter and John.

So every true Christian is bound to extend the knowledge and proclaim the glory of Christ. Are there not among our relatives, friends, and neighbors, some who are strangers to true religion? Let us persuade them to attend the services of the sanctuary and listen to the preaching of the Gospel, and, in the arms of faith and prayer, bring them to Jesus, that they may obtain his blessing. Are there no neglected children in the neighborhood of our habitations, growing up in ignorance and vice? Let us invite them to the Sunday school and Catechetical class, that they may there sit at the feet of Jesus, and as his disciples learn the way of life truly. Are there no desolate widows, and needy invalids, who pass their weary days and restless nights upon their beds of languishing, unsustained by faith in Jesus, uncheered with a hope of rest and joy beyond the grave? Can we not visit them with Bibles, and Prayer Books, and Tracts, which, as silent, but successful ministering angels, may allure them to brighter worlds, and point the way? Beyond this limited circle of our personal influence, there is a world lying in wickedness, for which

Jesus died. We must pray, we must give, we must labor for the conversion of mankind, until the Master comes again, and shall behold that world which he redeemed when suspended upon the cross, bowing in willing submission at his feet.

G. Staal W. H. Mote.

Zipporah.

New-York, D. Appleton & Co. 200, Broadway.

ZIPPORAH.

BY JOHN TODD, D. D.

THE shadows of old Horeb began to stretch over the plains of Midian, showing that the night was coming down upon the earth again, when a weary stranger sat down by a well of water. It was the only well in all the region. Down the glens and ravines came the flocks of the shepherds and the droves of the herdsmen, twice a day for water. The men came crowding and contending, to decide whose flock should be first served. They chode, and threatened each other; called abusive names, and the like; but the stranger took no notice of their wrangling. He had stooped down and slaked his thirst, and sat alone, either gloomy or sad. At length there came a flock down to the well, attended only by girls. They were young and fair, mild and peaceful. But the moment they came near, the rude shepherds declared that they should wait till all the rest had been served, even if it were till deep darkness had come on. They even became insolent and offensive in language to the maidens. It was then that the stranger sprang up like a lion from his lair, and declared that the flocks of the maidens should be the first served. And when the men

gathered around him, he threw them off and scattered them by his strength. He then courteously saluted the maidens, drew water for their charge, and sent them away, blessing him, ere the sun had gone down. Often did they turn to look at the noble-hearted and strong-handed stranger as he sat down again by the well, apparently lost in thought. They hastened home, and met their princely father just returning from a duty which had detained him — for he was a prince among men and a priest before God. He paused to smile upon his loved ones, and to ask them how it came to pass that they were through with watering their flock so early.

"Because, father," said Zipporah, the eldest and fairest, "a noble stranger met us at the well, drove away the rude shepherds who were insolent, and then drew water for us."

"From what country came he?"

"From Egypt, as we judged."

"What made ye think so?"

"Because he spoke the Egyptian language beautifully, and his dress was Egyptian. He must have been an Egyptian, and yet there was something more noble and lofty in his bearing than in any Egyptian I ever saw."

"No, he could not have been an Egyptian!"

"Why not, father?"

"Because an Egyptian abominates cattle and flocks, and would never draw water for them, or be seated near them — no, not even if maidens were there to admire him. But, Egyptian or no Egyptian, why have ye not brought him to our humble home, to share our hospitality?"

"Was it seemly, father, for maidens to be so bold with a stranger?"

"Was it seemly, girl, to leave a stranger alone, hungry, perhaps

sick, to spend the night in the open air, when we have a good shelter? Is that the kindness of maidens who are instructed to show mercy, and to live not for themselves? Go call him, and bid him welcome to our home."

Away went the maiden; but in what manner she approached him, or how she did the errand, we know not, but the evening found him with the family, engaged in lively conversation. Great was their amazement to learn that he belonged to the Hebrew race — of whom the daughters had heard but little, though they knew them to belong to an oppressed class, and they knew that by their father, they had been mentioned at the family altar with very special interest. But the stranger had no marks of slavery about him. On the contrary, his bearing was noble, not without self-respect, and like that of a man who had been accustomed to command, rather than to obey. They did not understand all the long conversation between their father and the guest, for they spake much in the Hebrew tongue; but they understood enough to know that his life had been an unusual one, — that some great purpose of his heart had been thwarted, — that a mystery seemed connected with his history which had not yet been cleared up; and that he must for the future bear exile from his home and country, and in solitude mourn over some calamities which he could not remove.

"He must have been disappointed in love," said Zipporah to her sister Ellah; "poor fellow! Is he not to be pitied?"

"Not he! — no, he was never in love, or at least, this is not the recent calamity and disappointment," said Ellah.

"How knowest thou that, mine sister?"

"By two special marks; first, he talks and mourns much about his mother, and, secondly, he looks on thee too admiringly to be breaking his heart for any other woman. I suspect thee of being

warm in thy words when thou wentest to call him at the well. More than once I have caught his eyes fastened on thee."

"Nonsense, Ellah. It is a fiction of thine own imagination. In fact when I spoke to him, I fairly trembled with awkwardness."

"It may be he watches thee to see if this trembling is habitual."

"Nonsense."

Long was the conversation between the father and the stranger. In the morning, the maidens were surprised to learn that they were no more to tend the flocks of their father. They were to be committed to the hands of the stranger. Awkwardly but resolutely did he enter upon his duties, and in a short time was master of his profession. In the progress of time the early surmises of the young Ellah were found to be correct, and the stranger became her brother by espousing the elder sister Zipporah; and they were proud to number Moses the Hebrew, as a member of their family.

Time moved on, and with a wing so downy that the gentle Zipporah hardly noticed his steps. She saw in her husband a humble man, faithful to his lowly duties, with a kind of sadness which was inexplicable, with now and then a flashing of hope, and a looming up of character, which showed that the Hebrew was a very uncommon man.

Nearly forty years after this marriage, and the Hebrew shepherd came home one evening with a brow so thoughtful and a countenance so anxious, that his wife was alarmed and in great distress. His conversation was now on schemes so incomprehensible, and so utterly beyond the power of a poor mountain-shepherd, that the family began to come to the fearful conclusion, that reason had forsaken her throne for ever. When Moses found that he could not be understood or believed, in regard to the solemn commission which God had given him, he merely proposed to revisit his relatives in Egypt, and

once more look upon the faces of those whom he had loved. With his wife and two sons he set out for Egypt. No one seeing his family on the ass, and he walking by their side with his shepherd's staff in his hand, would have taken him to be the deliverer and the guide of a nation — the man of many generations. On their way, the angel of God met them, and solemnly warned Moses that through regard to his wife's prejudices, he had committed a great sin in not having circumcised his youngest son. The sword was in the angel's hand, and the life of Moses was at stake. It was then that the Midianite mother gave way — circumcised her child, and wondered over the mystery of blood. Her husband's life was spared, but she murmured that it must be at the price of blood. Seeing that she would be a hindrance to himself, and perhaps a cause of unbelief in others, Moses gladly assented that for a season she should return back, with her children, to her father's house, and leave him to follow his high calling. She could not at that time sympathize with that love for his people whose flame forty years' absence had done nothing to quench; and she could not believe that if God had a work so mighty to accomplish he would select an instrument so lowly as her husband. We wonder that she could not see that, though the dust of Abraham slept in the cave of Machpelah, the God of Abraham still lived; that though Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, had done the work which they had been commissioned to do, yet the great plans of God were not yet accomplished. We wonder that she could not see that eighty years ago her husband had been snatched from death on the Nile, by a providence so manifest, that he might be destined in the divine plans to perform a great work. We wonder that she did not see that a man, who, in his retirement, could write the book of Job, — who held communion with God so constantly, and who had seen the Angel of the everlasting covenant in the burning bush — might even be the leader in the hands

of the Almighty One to deliver Israel from the bondage of Egypt. But what is so clear to us was dark to her; and she turned back to the mountains of Midian, and thus cut herself off from the privilege of sustaining and comforting her husband in his great trials, and of seeing the mighty acts of God in delivering his people and punishing his enemies, and her sons from receiving those sublime impressions, which in no age and in no circumstances would again be made on men. Thus unbelief turns us back and palsies our hand from duties, shuts us off from witnessing the mighty power of God, and takes away from others, golden opportunities of receiving good. Sad, indeed, is it for any one thus to stumble through unbelief; but doubly sad is it when the mother thus sets an example to her household.

Two old men, the one eighty and the other eighty-three, with a simple staff in the hand, were slowly descending a mountain and in solemn conversation. How feeble such instrumentality to move a proud king and his court, with a powerful army and at the head of a great nation, to permit one-tenth of his subjects to go off into the wilderness, following these two men! But Jethro, the prince and the priest of Midian, who had bid his son-in-law to go in peace, and we may hope his wife too, were following him with their prayers. And the hoary-headed elders of Israel believed Moses and Aaron, and in prayer cried unto God.

To follow Moses in the great work to which he was commissioned, and to watch the mysterious union of human and divine agency, of weakness and strength, of darkness and light, of folly and wisdom, would be a most grateful task. But this would be foreign from our plan. In the solitudes of the mountains, Zipporah spent several following years. News travelled very slow in those days. It was not till rumor had carried the fame of Moses through all the surrounding

regions, that she heard of his achievements, and learned to her amazement that her husband, the once humble shepherd of the hills, had become a prince and a leader, whose name would for ever stand foremost on the roll of greatness. It seemed like a dream to her, that millions of minds were actually acknowledging him as their deliverer, were receiving their laws and religion from him, and that he was in fact to be the founder of a nation, and the father of a mighty people. It was then that her songs broke out, and her faith, which had staggered so much, received strength. She was humbled that she had no more appreciated his character, encouraged him in his work, and shared his trials, rather than to quarrel with the ordinances of God, to fold her arms at home, and to live merely for herself. Then she told the story to her sons—not to make them proud of a father whose name they were to inherit, but to lead them to see what a work the God of their fathers was accomplishing through him. Old Jethro rejoices and praises God for the tidings which are brought to him. Again the family leave their home and travel towards the deserts.

On a bright morning, the sons of Moses pointed out to their grandfather in the distance, a bright little cloud, that hung stationary between heaven and earth. Then Jethro dismounted, and kneeled down and praised the Lord;—for he knew that he was now looking on the cloud which hung over the tabernacle, and in which God dwelt. In a short time they saw the bright tents, and heard the hum of the mighty travelling city of tents, and knew they were near. The tent of Moses was in front—the place where they were thronging from morning to evening for justice and for instruction. As they drew near, the heart of Zipporah fluttered and beat wildly. Would her husband receive, and acknowledge, and love her again? How changed was his lofty brow, by the cares and anxieties of his station! What a lofty character he now was! She was almost afraid to meet

his eye! But the moment he saw them, he forgets all the past, folds his wife and sons to his bosom, and with tears welcomes the good old Jethro to his tent. What a meeting was that! Long were the hours which the family spent that night, in recounting and in listening to the story of God's wonderful dealings towards Israel. If the wife found her husband now to be a great and a lofty character, he no less found that she was greatly chastened in piety, strengthened in faith and meekness, and was now better fitted to be his companion and friend than ever before. The separation had greatly improved her character. The great and the meek Moses too, was willing to receive hints and suggestions from his father-in-law, which were of great importance and benefit to him. Sweet was their communion together, in which both had clearer and deeper views into the plans and promises of Israel's God. The simplicity of character and deep piety of the priest of the mountains made a great impression on the hosts under Moses, and from the day of their arrival the whole family lived to do good.

Many years did Zipporah live in the tent of her husband, sharing his sorrows, alleviating his trials and labors, and living to be the light of his home. Without ambition or regret she saw her sons—not rulers or leaders—but taking a low place among the Levites, the servants of the tabernacle, to have no inheritance or name among the great ones of Israel. Her prayer was, that in all humility, they might serve their God and deliverer.

In the midst of the wilderness, in the burning desert, all Israel one morning saw the little white flag on the tent of Moses gone, and a small ribbon of black in its place. Then they crowded towards the tent, for they knew that the angel of death had been there, and that the heart of their leader was smitten. Silently the hosts passed around the tent, and blessed the memory of her who was gone. Many

rose up and called her blessed. They dug her grave among the burning sands of the desert, and laid her there alone, without a stone or ornament to mark the spot where she sleeps till the morning of the resurrection. Deep and sincere was the mourning of the great leader of Israel; and though he spent the night following the burial, in his tent alone, recalling the past and living over the past, even to the moment when he first saw the maidens at the well in Midian; yet when the morning sun rose and the cloud was taken up off the tabernacle, signifying that the host were to remove, the mourner was ready, and with a countenance and a voice calm and peaceful, he resumed his station, and all Israel felt that though the strong man was bowed he was not crushed. Zipporah sleeps in the desert, — but in the morning of the resurrection will she not come up and unite with those who sing "the song of Moses and the Lamb?"

C. Steal. W. H. Egleton.

The Woman of Canaan.

New York. D. Appleton & Co. 200, Broadway.

THE CANAANITISH WOMAN.

BY REV. THOMAS SMYTH, D. D.

"THEN Jesus arose, and went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid. For behold a woman of Canaan, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and fell at his feet, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me."

"The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phœnician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. But he answered and said unto her, Let the children first be filled, for it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their master's table; the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: and he said unto her, For this saying, be it unto

thee even as thou wilt; go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed."*

Behold her at his feet! with clasped hands
And uprais'd eye: her parted lips are moved
With words of earnest pleading; and her soul
Is agonized with all a mother's woe.
But he has turn'd away; nor word, nor look
Of pity, or of comfort has vouchsafed.
E'en his disciples, wondering, have join'd
Their prayers with hers; and yet he is unmov'd,
Nor merely silent. From his lips break forth
Harsh and unlook'd-for words, "The children's bread
Must not be given to dogs." Oh! who can tell
The bitter grief in that poor suppliant's heart?
She had come far to seek him, for she felt
Her hope was all in him. No less a power
Could wrest a child from the fell demon's rage;
Yet once, with energy of deep despair,
She humbly cries, "Truth, Lord: yet e'en the dogs
The children's crumbs partake!"—Behold, the beam
Of godlike pity glances from his eye!
Her faith has conquer'd; and from out the gloom
Of that dark night of woe, see dawn arise,
The shining of the Sun of Righteousness,
Rising for her with healing in his wings!

We have here a beautiful picture, embodying one of the most touching and picturesque scenes which "the romance of real life"

* Matt. xv. 21—29. Mark vii. 24—31.

could possibly supply. This picture is framed in a style of presentation inimitable for chaste and elegant simplicity, and the natural adornment of pure and unaffected emotion. And as we obtain a much more striking view of a fine picture by looking at its reflection, in a glass properly adjusted, we have such a glass provided in the case before us,—one by which the whole narrative, properly reflected, may impart its spirit of heavenly beauty to our own souls.

In this narrative, then, we "see as in a glass" "the shadow of good things to come." The Saviour here teaches us by an example—a living parable,—so that the encouragement and instruction imparted, are equally applicable to all ages and to all persons. We have here, in short, a lively representation of the nature of salvation and the way in which it is to be attained. This woman was A STRANGER, driven by the winds of stormy adversity to seek shelter and deliverance in the fold of the good Shepherd. A type and emblem of this sinful and miserable world,—of the bitterness of sin, which like an evil spirit, vexes and destroys the souls of men,—and of the greatness and glory of that salvation which is revealed to us in the Gospel. When we remember, says Chrysostom, who she was, and what was her errand, we cannot but consider the efficacy of Christ's coming and the power of his most glorious dispensation, which reached from one end of the world unto the other, embraced those who had not only forgotten God, but had also overthrown the laws of nature, and obscured that light which had been kindled in their hearts;—which called sinners, yea, even gross idolaters, to repentance;—and admitted even "dogs" to "participate in the children's bread."

Looking at the circumstances of the narrative we see in the event,—which was evidently foreseen and intended,—a pregnant illustration of that Providence which "directs our steps," and "shapes our ends, rough hew them as we may."

In consequence of the murder of John the Baptist by Herod, our Saviour had "departed by ship into a desert place apart." Being followed by the multitude, who now thronged upon him in vast numbers, he spent the day in healing and miraculously feeding them; and then dismissed both them and his disciples, and "went up into a mountain to pray." Being still, however, persecuted by the Scribes and Pharisees, our Saviour departed privately from the country of Gennesaret, and sought temporary seclusion in the borders of Tyre and Sidon. Here, though still in Judea, he was on the very confines of Phœnicia or the ancient Canaan, where he might hope to be perfectly retired. He entered therefore into an house, and would have no man know it. But as we are told that "the fame of him went throughout all Syria," he was soon discovered by the inhabitants—the remains of those ancient Canaanites whom God had commanded Joshua to extirpate on account of their aggravated wickedness. Tyre and Sidon had however remained unconquered, and had retained their idolatry till the time of Christ, when the superstition of the common people had become associated with an Epicurean atheism among the more enlightened and refined.

Such was the theatre on which was to be performed one of the most wonderful and instructive miracles of our Saviour. It was not long after his arrival before he was assailed with importunate demands upon that mercy which had never yet failed the petitioner, and from whose inexhaustible storehouse none had ever been sent empty away.

The suppliant who now cried unto our Saviour,—saying "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David,"—was A WOMAN. A woman! and in that name how much is there of sacred, deep, and tender thought.

> The very first
> Of human life, must spring from woman's breast;
> Our first small words are taught us from her lips;
> Our first tears quenched by her, and our last sighs
> Full often breathed out in a woman's hearing,
> When men have shrunk from the ignoble care
> Of watching the last hour of wasting misery.

How much of the charm, the happiness, and the joys of life are given to it by woman, whose lot it is

> To train the foliage o'er the snowy lawn;
> To guide the pencil, turn the tuneful page;
> To lend new flavor to the fruitful year,
> And heighten nature's dainties; in their race
> To rear the graces into second life;
> To give society its highest taste,
> Well ordered home, man's best delight to make,
> And by submissive wisdom, modest skill,
> With every gentle care eluding art
> To raise the virtues, animate the bliss,
> And sweeten all the toils of human life:
> This is the female dignity and praise.

How much, then, does woman need the elevating, the refining, and the equalizing influences of that "glorious Gospel" which teaches man — "who, while to man he is so oft unjust, is *always* so to woman," — that in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female; and that while the two sexes are different in capacity and office, they are all one in nature, dignity, danger, and destiny. And how much, too, does the Gospel require and rejoice in the services with which woman

has ever repaid its countless benefits conferred on her. Last at the cross and first at the sepulchre; woman has always been found the first to acknowledge, the foremost to defend, the readiest to minister to, and the last to abandon or betray, Christ and his cause.

This suppliant was A WOMAN OF CANAAN; a Greek, as the Jews denominated all but themselves; a Syro-Phœnician, being by birth a Syrian. Her country, which was situated on the frontiers of the Holy Land, about three days' journey from Jerusalem, was entered by Canaan the grandson of Noah, in express contrariety to the allotment of God, when he "divided among the nations their inheritance," and when Palestine was reserved as "the Lord's portion." His eldest son gave his name Sidon to one of the chief cities of the country. In fulfilment of Noah's prophecy, therefore, the Canaanites had become "servants of servants to their brethren;" and having been extirpated or enslaved by his chosen people, under God's express command, their remaining posterity were always regarded by the Jews with feelings of peculiar aversion and contempt.

But in addition to this ignominious character of the suppliant, she was A HEATHEN—an idolater—and, as such, the object of divine malediction and national abhorrence to every Israelite, by whom all idolaters were regarded as unclean—as "dogs" and swine. This woman, therefore, was a Gentile,—a Greek,—one of the *goim* to whom the light and knowledge of revealed truth had never been imparted. These *goim* or Gentiles were, however, eventually to be made partakers of "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God." So prophets and "holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," had long and often foretold. But the appointed time had not yet come when Christ was to become "a light to lighten the Gentiles," and thus "to perform the mercy promised unto the fathers." He was first to be "the glory of God's people Israel,"

and to make to them the offers of eternal life, before he "called a people who were not a people." Our Saviour, therefore, that he might "fulfil all righteousness," and do God's will in all things, commanded his apostles to confine their ministrations during his life, and for a season afterwards, to Judea. For these reasons, therefore, he discouraged the application of this woman who had come from a heathen country, because she was *a dog*, and not yet admitted to the privileges of a child.

And such were we. Such was our original country, and our primitive ancestry — "far off," — "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel," — "without God and without hope in the world." "But we are washed, we are sanctified," we are adopted into the heavenly family, and made "fellow citizens of the saints," "sons and daughters of the Lord," and "joint heirs" to an inheritance divine.

This suppliant woman WAS IN DISTRESS. Calamity had driven her from her home and country, and had made the cities of Phœnicia and the coasts of Tyre and Sidon a desert to her troubled spirit. And thus it is that many a weary sinner is led to flee from the haunts of worldly gayety, frivolity and sin, by the winds of calamity and the floods of trouble.

For He who knew what human hearts would prove,
How slow to learn the dictates of his love,
That hard by nature and of stubborn will,
A life of ease would make them harder still;
In pity to the souls his grace designed
To rescue from the ruins of mankind,
Call'd for a cloud to darken all their years,
And said — Go spend them in the vale of tears.

But our interest in this suppliant is increased by learning that she WAS A MOTHER.

A mother! sweetest name on earth;
We lisp it on the knee,
And idolize its sacred worth
In manhood's infancy.

No earthly name can so sweetly soothe the breast or start the tear — as mother. It brings with it the reverence, the sanctity and the love of Heaven, and whatever is purest and most hallowed in the joys of earth. To honor her while living, — to revere her memory when dead, — to cheer her in despondency, — to succor her in adversity, — and, when left alone, to be to her a home, a husband, and her all in all of earthly good; — this is the willing tribute of every grateful mind. And oh! when we recall the tender scenes of infancy, — call back to sight a mother's bosom, — hear her lullaby, — survey her toilsome, anxious cares, — and think upon that love which was happy in our happiness, and miserable in our grief, — we feel that all the recompense we can possibly make her is but as nothing.

A mother's love! the fadeless light
That glimmers o'er our early way,
A star amid the clouds of night,
An ever-burning, quenchless ray.

But in this suppliant behold not only a mother, but a mother probably bereaved of her only earthly stay, and now afflicted in the hopeless misery of that daughter who was perhaps her only child, and

who was now "grievously tormented by a devil." She was, therefore, the widowed mother of a demoniac daughter. The hour of Satan had then come, and "the powers of darkness" were then permitted to manifest their hellish rage, in order that their destruction might be the more illustriously displayed.

Poor Canaanitish mother!
Mark how she strays with folded arms,
And her head is bent in woe;
She shuts her thoughts to joy or charms,
No tear attempts to flow.

All hope has fled. Vain pity heeds her not. Earth affords no refuge. The heavens gather only the blackness of darkness. Whither, ah! whither can she flee? There was but one refuge which could supply a covert from the storm, and but one physician who could apply a balm to her wounded spirit. Blessed be God! she has found that refuge and secured access to that good Physician. When she fled from that desolate home, and escaped from the unnatural fury of that demoniac daughter, an invisible hand directed her steps, and led her to him who was able to save even in this uttermost extremity. Despair not then, oh thou widowed and worse than childless mother! But pour out all thy soul before his throne in prayer.

Before his throne, who never yet did frown
One humble suppliant from his mercy-seat;
Who, if with guilt thy soul is bowed down,
In the right path will lead thine erring feet;
He who refused not Mary's mournful plea,
Will shed bright rays of joy and set thy spirit free.

Mystery and miracle of grace! She — the wanderer, the Canaanite, the idolater, the outcast, homeless, friendless mother — believes. See her as she presses eagerly towards the sacred person of the Saviour. Behold her as she now forces her way to his presence, and falling down worships him, saying, "O Lord, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me, for my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." How short, how simple, but oh! how unutterably earnest and importunate that prayer! She had heard of the promised Redeemer, who should "bruise Satan under his feet; destroy the works of the devil, and unloosing their fetters, bid his captives go free." Amid her desolate voyage over life's stormy sea, this hope of deliverance had been as an anchor to her soul. God had shined upon her to give her the light of the knowledge of his mercy as it is exhibited in the face of Jesus Christ. To him, therefore, she comes. She goes neither to the physicians nor to the magians of Phœnicia, but casts herself with all her cares upon him who is able to save both soul and body.

Oh that every weary heart, to whom God has sent the attracting and convincing influences of his Spirit, would "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, seeing that it is God who worketh in them both to will and to do."

If there's a prayer, like spring's first flower,
  More sweet than all the rest,
'Tis offered in that hallowed hour
  When first the heart's impressed.
The angels listen to that prayer,
  Then bear it up to heaven;
And who can tell the joy that's there,
  When such a one's forgiven?

What means this woman had enjoyed of coming to the knowledge

of Christ as Lord and yet man, as the promised Redeemer, and as one mighty to save, we are left to conjecture. They must have been at best very limited and partial. Unlike to us who live in the sunshine of religious privileges, she must have groped her way out of darkness into the marvellous light of the Gospel. "O woman, great is thy faith!"—which, springing from a grain of mustard seed cast into a dry and barren soil, became a tree of such gigantic growth and vigor. "O Lord, increase our faith," and let not this heathen rise up in the judgment and condemn us. To her there was no personal promise, and no assurance of personal acceptance. But believing that if Christ willed he could grant her request, she threw herself upon him,—when repulsed, returned again,—and thus wrestling against apparent severity and rejection, her language, like one of old was, "I will not let thee go until thou bless me." Oh for such faith as hers! —such faith as cleansed the leper,—healed the lame,—unsealed the deaf,—unchained the palsied tongue,—illumined the blind,—cheered the sorrowful,—imparted peace, meekness, charity, and love,—and raised even the dead to life. Could we enjoy such faith—and why should we not?—looking to God's exceeding great and precious promises, and to them alone, we might smile upon impossibilities, and say "it shall be done."

> She does not doubting ask, can this be so?
> The Lord has said it, and she needs no more.

Mark the natural and becoming modesty of this woman's faith. She stood at a respectful distance. There was no vociferation, no loud and bitter lamentations, no murmuring complaints. Having uttered her requests, she awaits in silence the hoped for answer. Oh! how prevalent is such a gentle and assured disposition with him in whose

sight a meek and quiet spirit is of great price! While, therefore, Christ answered not a word to her prayer, he "made answer to her silence, and he who regarded not her noise, made a reply to her reverence and adoration."

Her might is gentleness—she winneth way
By a soft word, and by a softer look.

Mark the patience of this woman's faith. As the evening star brightens while the darkness envelopes the earth, so did her faith seem fairest and most illustrious amid increasing and apparently insurmountable difficulties. She seems to say, "though he slay all my hopes, yet will I trust in him." She lay therefore at his feet in prostrate penitence and tears, and "worshipping him, said, Lord, help me."

Blessed, yet sinful one, and broken-hearted!
The crowd are pointing at the thing forlorn,
In wondering and in scorn!
Thou weepest days of happiness departed;
Thou weepest, and thy tears have power to move
The Lord to pity and love.

What humility, what ingenuity, and what perseverance does the faith of this suppliant exhibit! A woman, a mother, a widow, afflicted in an only child, and yet no sympathy in Jesus, not even a reply; and when he did speak, a repulse, a denial, and opprobrious recrimination! And can she endure all this? Was ever faith like hers? No. Never was there such faith even in Israel; and if Abraham is "the father," she may be styled the mother "of the faithful." She faints not. She despairs not. She is dumb and opens not her

mouth. Every accusation she ratifies. Every charge of unworthiness she aggravates as true in all its force. When a stone is given her instead of bread, and she is made a dog rather than a child, she thankfully receives even this admission, and supplicates divine compassion upon herself as chief of sinners and not worthy to be called a child. While admitting, therefore, that she was unworthy of the children's meat, she asks to be permitted to eat of the crumbs which fall from the Master's table. Thus like Manasses and David, did she acknowledge her vileness, saying, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight, that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest and clear when thou judgest." She admits the truth in all its self-condemnation, and "is not able so much as to lift up her eyes to heaven, but smites upon her breast." She draws encouragement from seeming repulse, and says, "For thine own mercies' sake, pardon mine iniquities, for they are great." She prizes the least communication of mercy as a priceless blessing, and reposes her hope upon the affluence and all-sufficiency of the Saviour's love. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

So it was with this poor suppliant. In her Christ has given an illustrious example of faith, of patience, of humility, of modesty, of prudence, and of perseverance; which shall be mentioned to her praise, and to the encouragement of all who shall hereafter come unto the Saviour, wherever in all the world this Gospel of the grace of God shall be preached. She had been tried so as by fire, that like gold she might be seven times purified. Christ, for a small moment, had forsaken her as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and in a little wrath had hid his face from her for a moment. But with greater mercies did he gather her, and with "everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer." The darkness therefore passed away. The star of hope arose upon her darkened breast.

She "heard the voice of joy and gladness, that the bones God had broken might rejoice." She who had victoriously endured the trial, and had clung to the anchor of Christ's word amid every discouragement, now saw his countenance lifted upon her in peace, and heard those blessed words, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

Joy, joy to the mother! her Saviour hath spoken,
The word hath been uttered in accents divine,
Arise, lo! the power of the tempter is broken,
And, disconsolate mother, thy daughter is thine.
Thus, Lord, when distressed, we poor sinners resemble
In hopeless dejection this object of love,
Give peace to those hearts that as anxiously tremble;
Oh! revive their lost souls by thy word from above.

"And her daughter was made whole from that very hour,"—whole, we would believe, spiritually as well as physically. And is it not delightful to hope that this redeemed captive, having been led by her mother to the knowledge of the Saviour, was able, like many a child of maternal faith and prayer, with devout thankfulness to say:—

And if I e'er in heaven appear—
A mother's holy prayer,
A mother's hand, and gentle tear
That pointed to the Saviour dear,
Have led the wanderer there.

G. Staal F. Holl

The Witch of Endor.

New-York. D. Appleton & Co. 200, Broadway.

THE WITCH OF ENDOR.

BY SAMUEL HANSON COX, D. D.

WHAT a degradation! The king of Israel, Saul, the vicegerent of God, the great visible head of the Jewish autocracy, the first whom Samuel anointed with fresh oil, he — become the pupil and the suitor of a witch! It is so. Perplexed and in despair, there seems scarce "method in his madness." He is in the rapids, about to shoot the gulf — the catastrophe is certain, the cataract merges him, he vanishes soon and for ever.

Awful case! A night dark with horror settles over him. He was a reprobate indeed. He had sinned away all hope of mercy. His sin was habituated, presumptuous, incorrigible. He was abandoned of his God — all intercourse, all favor, all responses denied. He is a doomed man. From what height — to what depth! What he might have been! What he is!

He had indeed enough to make him wretched. He felt himself human, rather than royal. His enemies, the Philistines, had invaded his territories. They had marched, a mighty host, unquestioned through the centre of his land, "and came and pitched in Shunem. And Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa.

And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled."

It was in this extremity, that he resorts to the witch. In what her powers or her pretensions consisted, he is not now the man to inquire. As the supreme magistrate of the land, he was under high obligation to punish witches, and exterminate them all. In this work he had made some demonstration and some progress. He knows of no other resource. Endor lay north of the enemy, and he south of all. He aims, however, to keep an incognito. His path is perilous. He goes disguised, at night, with two picked and trusty companions; and the witch warily receives them. He puts her on a strange service—"Bring me up Samuel." She hesitates.

He allays her fears, swearing by Jehovah that "there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing." He engages more than he can perform. It is all wickedness! He swears he will not do his duty; and that her sin, to which himself is the powerful tempter, shall incur no punishment. But, after all, what does he mean? Is Samuel in the keeping of a witch? Will he come at her bidding? Does he honor her incantations, or correspond with her sorcery? Has a graceless hag the skill or the power to summon to her presence, the spirit of a glorified saint? Would she like to see him probably? He had been in heaven for three years and more. What mean they all? Is it all the play of grown children? Are they really in earnest? Can Saul confide in her, or she in Saul? Is she honest in the attempt to raise Samuel? Does Saul really expect to see him, having faith in the potentiality of the witch? And if he succeeds, and sees and hears Samuel, what good will it do him? Is Samuel on Saul's side; or, suppose it, can he benefit whom God hath deserted? Poor Saul! What a fool—the pains-taking votary of a witch.

We shall perplex no reader with a discussion, or even an array, of

learned theories. We boast of no great learning; and shall apply the principles of grammar, and faith, and common sense, only, in the solution of the scene at Endor, with its mysteries. Its interpretation seems easy and true, satisfactory and certain, as well as instructive.

Our first question is — Was Samuel actually there? Was it indeed Samuel that appeared and spoke?

Our answer is prompt in the affirmative. The fact is plainly asserted in the inspired history—Samuel was there in reality, as well as apparition, voice, and character.

It is not our way—though we have read something of German literature and theology, are acquainted with Germans, and have actually been in Germany, as well as Holland, France, and Switzerland—it is still not our way, so learned, as to deny or theorize away the plain facts of revelation. Had we such an erudition and such a propension, we might prefer, in our philosophy, to begin with the facts of nature; and making our own ignorance there the criterion of all impossibility, exalt our own knowledge as the standard and the measure of all reality. As it is, we go for facts in the Bible and in nature, as the premises of all our ratiocination and our theory. And if our reputation for originality and profundity—below the bathos of all light and evidence — is to suffer as the consequence, we hope to be preserved from a desperate resort to learned infidels, or to philosophic wizards, or to scholastic idolatry of any sort, for supplementary oracles of wisdom.

The witch, understanding the wish of her customer, went below into the cellar of her house, to prepare her machinery for its gratification. With her it was plainly all artifice and illusion. Her responses were to be given by ventriloquism, or possibly from the voice of some of her suffragans, habited and metamorphosed for the occasion — and with little help extraordinary from her infernal

patron, "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

It is plain from the whole scene, and indeed it seems to us the only true or rational impression, that, just here, God interposed. In his awful judicial sovereignty, his providence had anticipated the matter; and though he had denied Saul an answer in the ordinary ways of his worshippers, he chose to send him, as an enemy, at once his sentence and his summons, on this occasion of his own derelict invention and procurement. The word of God declares that it was Samuel. His message shows only the holy steadfastness and consistency of the throne. He is wholly and calmly on the part of God. "Satan is not divided against himself;" and this prodigy was surely none of his. Samuel utters oracles—just as they came to pass. Satan is no seer of the future, no prophet of the truth; and in his politics against God, he is remarkably short-sighted as well as false.

The witch, too, was obviously disconcerted and scared. Some mightier power invisible, was ordering against her the phenomena of the scene. Her practised methods and machinations were in disarray; not at her bidding, not at her wish, not as before in her experience, "an old man came up, and he was covered with a mantle." She screamed at the sight, retreated from her jugglery, and accused Saul; as knowing that none but the king of Israel could be the personage for whom earth opened and disclosed the prophet messenger. Her words import not only terror and astonishment, but also a conviction of a prodigy from God. "I saw Gods," said she, "ascending out of the earth." The Hebrew word is only that which ordinarily is rendered God, and it should have been given here in the singular. Her expressions were indeed incoherent in part; and well they might be, as coined in the mint of consternation. The witch was no heathen or polytheist, more than the king. She knew well whom Saul meant

by Samuel, and she believed generally in Jehovah as the only true God. Samuel stood before them. "And Saul perceived that it was Samuel; and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself."

The language of Samuel conforms, as the whole of Scripture does, very properly, to the ordinary forms and phrases of human thought. It is the common way of the Bible. Its style is neither metaphysical, nor mathematical, nor suited to the anticipations of the curious or the captious. It is like nature. It is the simplicity and the nudity of truth. In general, it is very intelligible; easily interpreted by honesty, and speciously perverted by fraud. Why should any man allow himself to be so morally blinded by any influence, and act under it, as if it were his interest to misunderstand or vitiate the oracles of the eternal God? Can he alter their reality, or change the things to which they refer? Could Saul do it, with the witch and the devil to help him? How ineffable the horrors and the delusions of a grace-abandoned state!

"And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? And Saul answered, I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known to me what I shall do.

"Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the Lord is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy?" The holy seer proceeds; recapitulates the sins of Saul, in a few only of their chief perpetrations; and predicts the defeat of his armies as a visitation of judgment from the Lord, and the death of himself and his sons in the gory conflict. His words sunk, like bolts of fire, into the soul of Saul. He knew it was a response from God, come at last!

"Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel." Comparatively the witch retained her self-possession. The next day verified all those words, and even transcended them, in its chapter of bloody disasters. Israel was defeated; Saul and his sons were slain.

Let us think of some instruction here given us.

1. The descending scale of sin, and its horrors at the last. Compare Saul at Endor with the witch, with Saul forty years before at Ramah with Samuel! What a change! He never indeed loved God. He was never an "Israelite indeed," whose heart was renovate and pure. But as a sinner how largely had he deteriorated, "grown worse and worse," as it is written of "evil men!" Now how squalid, how infatuated, how far fallen! What a type of wrath! The meanest man, and probably the greatest sinner—that is, the guiltiest in the world! What a beacon, what a warning, what a moral monster on the earth! *Obsta principiis*, say the Latins—that is, resist the beginnings. Spiritually, the beginnings are "the thoughts and intents of the heart," the latent motives of the mind. It is here that we get away from God; and when loose and going, how far gradually, how low imperceptibly, "by little and little" may we fall!

Our preservation is alone this—genuine piety. Our faith towards God, when enlightened, operative, and walking with his prophets, keeps us within the eternal inclosure of his covenant, gives us the consolation often of consciousness that we are there, and antedates to us the holy joys of heaven. It keeps us from the deceitfulness of sin, from the perfidy of our own hearts, and from the devices of "the prince of this world."

2. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus teaches us, that, if a man obey not "Moses and the Prophets, neither would he be persuaded though one rose from the dead." Here we see the truth of it

exemplified. Samuel rose from the dead; Saul heard him and did not repent. He made no motion like piety—like confession, penitence, or prayer; neither did the Jews when Lazarus rose and they knew it; nor do they to this day, though Jesus rose, and all evidence, increasing continually for more than eighteen centuries, proves it. It is the Spirit of God alone, and that by the onset of his effectual grace, that savingly persuades a sinner. How little do the unconverted know God, or themselves, or the truth!

3. What shall we say of this instance of female character? A Jewess—and a witch! A daughter of Sarah and a daughter of Satan! A professed worshipper of the true God, and a professional rebel against his authority. We say that she is a most degraded example of female depravity—and we trace or describe it as much the result probably of a neglected education, the power of evil example, the perversion of the intellectual powers, the sway of corrupt habit, the facilities of temptation, the wants and exposures of the sex, the desire of wealth and fame, iniquity in high places, and the tyranny of common ignorance. These causes, singly or in combination, will account for such a specimen. They commend her much to our pity, even if more to our censure. Perhaps her parents, especially her mother, were of degradation, moral, social, and ancestral too. She might have had never one-tenth of the religious advantages, which the fair, who reads this, may, with more criminality, yet with an immaculate reputation in the world, have neglected, or abused, or resisted, and spurned away from her. Think of this! Light enhances guilt. Their light, in the reign of Saul, more than twenty-nine hundred years ago, was very small to ours; the dawn of morning to the light of noon. Still, she seems to have been no original fool. Her powers of mind were doubtless strong, versatile, and good. Sagacity, promptitude, invention, and self-reliance, were credibly her

natural attributes; by use invigorated and improved. This grieves us more. It is the pathos of the picture. A female, who, in another age, and in their circumstances, might have figured in society, as a Rachel Russell, or a Hannah More, or a Mary Lundie; and dying left a memory that should be its own monument, is hopelessly consigned to her own base passions, in her own low spheres, and with her mean pleasures and pursuits! At length she turns witch, practises enchantments, defies the laws of God and man, and is printed in history indelibly as an object of terror and abhorrence! Through what other stages and gradations of crime and misery, successive, she may have passed, in reaching such "a depth, profounder still and still profounder, in the fathomless abyss of folly, plunging in pursuit of death;" what privations she suffered or what wrongs endured; of what perfidy she might have been the victim, and to what process of hardening she might have been passively and cruelly abandoned; we nothing know. Judging indeed from other documents, we suppose or imagine the downward sequence as almost of nature or necessity. One hypothetical plea we may make for her—possibly the peculiar wants and exposures of the sex! Fragile, sensitive, dependent, more than men, a woman, alas! too often, in all our modern society too, may find herself in penury, a lone female, a solitary widow, a delicate unfriended girl. Helpless, forlorn, neglected by those who should support and shield her, she is in straits of soul-piercing poverty. Oh! what a temptation—to do, or to be, any thing for a livelihood! Yes, we may well here commiserate the condition of myriads of women—the more, because the evil, from some of its attributes and relations, seems incorrigible. It must be prevented, since it can scarcely be cured! Prevention is our wisdom. It is here the grand resource of society. Let parents be aware of it. Let them practically dread it. Let us educate our daughters, truly, purely, guardedly, wisely, and

devoutly! Let us educate the sex; the mothers not more than the educators of the world. We want mothers that are mothers indeed; since the proverb is not more memorable for age, than for use and for sense, *As is the mother, so is her daughter.* Indeed, the faults of a worthy mother, are imitated oftener than her virtues. But if she has no virtues to be imitated, her daughters will copy her vices or defects as a thing of course.

C. Staal. W. H. Mote.

The Daughter of Jarius.

New-York, D. Appleton & Co. 200, Broadway

DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS.

BY WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

Notwithstanding the almost endlessly diversified character of human experience, insomuch that no two individuals can be found whose history is exactly the same, there are yet some things that fall to the lot of men every where and at all times with considerable uniformity. For instance, no age can be found in the world's history, and no country on the earth's surface, in which men have lived or do live in undecaying health: you cannot find the dwelling in which sickness in some form or other, does not enter, as an occasional, if not a frequent, visitant. What happens to every family, at some time, happened on a certain occasion, to a family in the city of Capernaum, the head of which was a man of some ecclesiastical note, Jairus by name, "a ruler of the synagogue." He seems to have been not only an officer of some standing in the Jewish church, but a truly religious man; and yet neither his rank, nor his character, kept out of his dwelling the barbed arrows of adversity.

A distressing malady had seized upon one of his children, a fine promising girl, and an only daughter, about twelve years old. Whether any medical aid had been called previous to the application

to Jesus, we are not informed; we only know that her case seemed to be rapidly approximating a fatal crisis when the Saviour was applied to. The parents had evidently become satisfied that their child was beyond the reach of all the ordinary means of relief; and as parental affection in such a case will never stop short of the very last resort, it was not strange that they thought of the great Physician, who was then going about the country, performing signal and even miraculous cures. Happily for the poor girl, as well as for her father and all concerned, he was among the few of the men of note among the Jews, who were disposed to acknowledge the claims of Jesus; and the humble and reverential manner in which he approached him, shows that however imperfect may have been his view of the Saviour's character, he was at heart ready to do homage to him as a great and extraordinary personage.

It is determined then, as all other help is manifestly unavailing, that trial shall be made, if possible, of the skill and power of this great philanthropist. And who shall go to search him out? for as he was going about the country in various directions in the fulfilment of his mission, it might not be easy at once to find him. The father himself determines to go; for though it must have cost him a severe effort, as no father consents readily to be away from the bedside of an apparently dying child, yet he might have thought that he should have more influence with Jesus than another person, and that the case was one of too much urgency to be intrusted to another. With a sad and probably an agitated spirit, he sallies forth in quest of the only Being on earth, who he has any hope can prevent his daughter's malady from reaching a fatal termination.

Jesus, always about his Father's business, happened at that time to be a guest in the house of his friend and disciple Matthew; and he was engaged in vindicating his own conduct and that of his disciples

in reference to certain matters, against the cavils of some of the Scribes and Pharisees. But the appearance of this distressed father among them seems to have interrupted his discourse. With all the anxiety of a father's heart depicted in his countenance and breathing in his utterances, he made his way to the merciful Saviour, and fell down at his feet, and told in a few words his pitiful story, and besought him with a truly agonizing importunity, to hasten back with him to his house to avert the fatal issue. No wonder that the compassionate heart of Jesus should have yielded to his tale of sorrow, and that he should forthwith, in consideration of such faith as he here saw exhibited, have consented to the anxious father's request. And as the company who were present understood that this was to be the occasion of a miracle, they followed him, some perhaps from curiosity, and others possibly from better motives, to witness the performance of it.

What the distance was between the place where they had been, and the place whither they were going, we are not informed; but probably it was not a long walk. But while they were on the way, when every minute was an hour to the poor anxious father, a circumstance occurred which must have seemed to him exceedingly inauspicious in regard to the recovery of his child; a circumstance that delayed, for some little time, the Saviour's arrival at his dwelling. In the crowd by which he was attended, there was a woman in the most humble circumstances, who had been for twelve years afflicted with a grievous malady, which had resisted all medical skill, and had exhausted her little substance. Having heard that Jesus wrought wonderful cures, and that there was healing for the worst diseases in the mere touch of him, she resolved that she would make an experiment for herself; and with more of the confidence than the frankness of true faith, she undertook to secure to herself stealthily a recovery from her malady. And she accomplished her object. She came

behind him, amidst the throng by whom he was attended, and touched the fringe of his garment, and was instantly made whole. Having now gained her purpose, she would probably have retired unobserved, but that Jesus, willing to turn the miracle to some account in respect to those who were present, called out for the person who had touched him; and after an expression of surprise from his disciples that he should have asked who touched him, in such a crowd, he fastened his eye upon his recovered patient, to show her that she was not hid; whereupon she instantly came forward, and confessed what she had done, and what she had experienced in consequence of it. She knew that there had been a want of candor in her approach to the Saviour, and she evidently expected a rebuke from him; but with his accustomed meekness and compassion, he passed over the infirmity which she had betrayed, and commended her faith, and sent her forth permanently healed of her malady.

Notwithstanding the benevolence of this act on the part of Jesus, it must have been rather a sad episode to the bleeding heart of that agitated father; for he could not but feel that each moment that passed increased the probability that he should find his daughter a corspe. And this was not all; for while Jesus was yet speaking to the woman, the tidings came from the ruler's house that the worst had actually been realized; and it was intimated that it would be needless to trouble the Master to come to the house, as there was no longer any thing for him to do. It was no doubt an awful moment to the father,—(for what father ever heard the news of the death of a beloved daughter without the breaking up of the inmost fountains of sorrow in his bosom?)—and possibly he had begun to say in the bitterness of his spirit,—"Oh that that miracle of mercy upon the poor woman had been performed at some other time, and then perhaps my child had not died!" But Jesus does not allow time for

his anxious fears to operate; he encourages his faith by the assurance that it shall still be rewarded by the giving back to him of this endeared object of his care and solicitude. Cheering words, indeed, must these have been to the heart of this good man, as he walked towards his dwelling to look upon the face of his departed child, and to meet his family overwhelmed with the sorrows of bereavement.

And now they have reached the house; and what a house it is, *they* need not be told who have ever witnessed a dying scene in their own domestic circle. There is in such a dwelling that which words cannot describe, and even imagination cannot reach, unless it has taken the sharp and bitter lessons of experience. There are tears standing in every eye; there is a pang venting itself from every lip; there is a sense of solitude, a bewildered hopeless sort of feeling, and sometimes the wild look of frenzy, which distinguish such a house from every other. And we have no reason to believe that the dwelling of Jairus when he returned to it, was less a scene of distress than is experienced in other similar cases; indeed, it would seem from the narrative that there were peculiar demonstrations of grief; for we are told by one Evangelist, that "all wept and bewailed her;" and by another, that "the people wept and wailed greatly;" so that she seems to have been not only peculiarly beloved by her own family, but a favorite among her acquaintances at large; and there had come thither also "flute players," to soothe the grief of the friends by their mournful strains.

Jesus has scarcely entered the house before he makes known his gracious purpose to give back the damsel to the hearts of her weeping friends. But where, oh ye lookers on, where is your faith? I listen to hear words of loving and grateful confidence in Christ: but instead thereof, the voice of incredulity and even derision meets my ear.

"What! That corpse for which the grave is ready and waiting, to be reanimated? Those eyes again to open voluntarily, and that countenance to be relumed with a returning smile, and all that mechanism restored to its healthful and vigorous operation? Let those believe it who can digest impossibilities. Be the power of your Master what it may, it surely is not adequate to the changing back of a clod into an animated being!"

Stand by now, ye incredulous ones, and let the mighty power of God be displayed to your confusion. Ye shall not be permitted to witness the miracle, because of your unbelief; but ye shall be constrained to acknowledge it, because she whom you now behold a fit subject for the sepulchre, shall quickly stand up before you in the exercise of all the functions of a recovered life. Enter, parents, to see your child start into life again. Enter, ye chosen disciples, who, on other occasions, were deemed worthy of peculiar honor,—enter and witness a new proof of the power and mercy of the Master whom you serve. And now that ye are all here, with the dead in the midst of you, look on and behold how easily death is conquered. Jesus stands by the bedside; there is no parade in the way of preparation; nothing that betrays the least distrust of his ability to do what he has undertaken. He takes hold of her hand, and says to her, "Maiden, I say unto thee, rise up." Death had made his mark upon her; but those omnipotent words effaced it. She breathed, she spoke, she walked; and as her life, though restored by miracle, was not to be supported by miracle, Jesus immediately ordered that food should be given her. Do you ask whither her spirit had fled during the time that death had dominion over her? I answer, this is no part of God's revelation, and therefore it is not a legitimate subject for human inquiry. Enough for us to know that she was dead, and afterwards was alive again.

What must have been her emotions on taking her place again among the living! To have heard again the voice of parental love; to have opened her eyes on the radiant countenance, the glorious form of him who had done it; to have reflected that she had not only passed through the dark valley, as all must, but had actually made a return passage at the bidding of the "Resurrection and the Life,"—who can conjecture the reflections, the feelings, the resolutions that must have sprung up in her youthful mind? We know nothing of her history beyond this period; but it surely is not unreasonable to suppose that her life was an unceasing expression of gratitude to him who had denied the claim which the grave had early made upon her.

Her fond parents, too—what a strangely sorrowful, strangely blessed experience was theirs! How quick the transition, from deep mourning to the most intense joy! Many other parents have seen their children die, and have expected to meet them again in the resurrection of the just; but where are the parents in whose behalf Omnipotence has thus anticipated the work of the great resurrection day? What must have been their communion with each other, what with the loved recovered one, what their recollections of this event as long as the lived? Nay, can we reasonably doubt that the scenes of that wonderful day are still often in their mind, and call forth fresh thanksgivings from their lips, while they cast their crowns at the feet of him who took their daughter by the hand in that chamber of death, and said "Live."

Jesus, in the most splendid of his miracles, never betrayed the semblance of ostentation; on the contrary, he often seemed disposed to throw a veil over his mighty works. Hence, in this case, he charged the witnesses of this stupendous display of his power, not needlessly to trumpet it abroad. It was a thing of course, however,

that it should come to be known; for many had known that the damsel was dead, and the fact that she was again among the living, told the whole story. Jesus passed on to perform other miracles, while the fame of this was left to work its own way through the surrounding country.

I love to visit the house of Jairus, because there I find a glorious confirmation of the truth of my religion. I know that the doctrines which my Master taught are true, because I cannot doubt that he who raised the dead must have had a divine power dwelling in him. I contemplate his instructions with more delight, after having got my mind here filled with the evidence that he came forth from the Father, to reveal the Father's counsels. Infidel cavils,—dreams of a wild and cheerless skepticism—invade not the sanctuary of my comfort; tempt not my faith in those words of eternal life which my Redeemer hath spoken! There are other witnesses enough that Jesus is the Son of God, but you may dismiss whomsoever else you will, if you will only leave me with the testimony of this recovered victim of death.

I love to go to the house of Jairus, because there I find a most impressive example of my Saviour's benevolence. Who would not value the recollection of a day spent with that fine model of a philanthropist, Howard; or of a single circuit made in company with him through one of the lazarettos or prisons, which he made it his vocation to visit and to improve? But a greater than Howard was he who performed that miracle of benevolence in the recovery of the ruler's daughter. And what he did there, was only a specimen of his every day labors. God so loved the world as to send his Son into it on an errand of love. And in the fulfilment of his mission, he scattered blessings at every step;—blessings for the body and for the soul. Stand up, ye multitudes, whose wants were supplied by his

bounty, whose diseases were cast out by his power, and testify to the goodness and compassion of your deliverer. Stand up, ye ransomed ones whom no one can number, and let Heaven's arch ring with yet louder hosannas as you connect with the joys of an immortal existence the sufferings and sacrifices, the overflowing and boundless compassion to which you owe them.

I love to linger in the house of Jairus, because there I contemplate a pledge, even a specimen, of the resurrection to life. I look upon that maiden, and I cannot doubt that her sleep is the sleep of death. There is certainly no living principle there; the utmost that death can do, ever did, it has done. I look again, and behold the maiden liveth;—the blood circulates, the heart warms, the eye opens and kindles. The reason is, that my Redeemer has stood by and spoken death itself into meek submission. I see my fellow-creatures dying around me, and I know that my time must ere long come. I know, too, that the earth has received into its bosom, myriads who once walked upon its surface; and the thing that hath been shall be, till the purposes of God in successive generations shall be accomplished. And shall the dead sleep for ever? Oh no! they shall hear the voice of the Son of God,—the same voice that said to that maiden, "Arise;"—and hearing, they shall live. The sepulchral keys are all given up, and every sepulchre is unlocked. The bowels of the earth, the caverns of the ocean, every spot where human dust has rested, obeys the mandate to give up its dead. Wherefore, Christians, comfort one another with these words.

C. Staal. F. Holl.

The Widow of Nain.

New-York, D. Appleton & Cº 200 Broadway.

WIDOW OF NAIN.

BY RT. REV. J. H. HOPKINS, D. D.

THE story of the Widow of Nain sets before us one of those beautiful and affecting examples of our Saviour's goodness and power, which characterized the sublime course of his whole earthly ministry. We shall first cite the brief and simple statement of Scripture, and then ask our reader's attention to those features of the narrative which more especially concern ourselves.

"It came to pass," saith the sacred historian, "that Jesus went into a city called Nain, and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now, when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier, and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, arise. And he that was dead, sat up and began to speak: and he delivered him to his mother. And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, that a great prophet is risen up among us, and that God hath visited his people."

Now here, in the groundwork of the narrative, we have a case of domestic sorrow which comes home to the knowledge of us all—a widow, and an only son,—sickness, and death, and sore affliction. Let us dwell upon it a little while, and fill up the expressive outline as observation and experience shall best warrant.

First then, we see the widow; once, perhaps, a happy wife. There was a day when she appeared in all the joy of her espousals. The bridal wreath was placed upon her head, and parents and friends crowded round to bless her union, and long years of earthly bliss seemed to open their vista of hope before her. We may naturally suppose that she loved her husband, and therein she did well. Perhaps she loved him too dearly, and gave him that place in her heart which belonged to God. Ah! how often the unlawful excess of the natural affections leads to idolatry! How easy it is to put the creature in the throne which of right should be reserved for the Creator! Blinded by the very virtues of her companion, and thinking him worthy of the warmest devotion of her youthful feelings, she fell into the sin committed by thousands, and garnered up her whole soul in the poor frail bond which linked their lot together for a few brief years, and thrust far away from her thoughts the prospect of their separation, as if the sentence had never been uttered by the Almighty: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return;"—as if the word of the Most High had not recorded the solemn lesson of earthly illusion: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity;" "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward."

But the kindness of Providence added another gift to her worldly happiness, and she became the rejoicing mother of a son, to whom her heart clung with the untold strength of parental affection. And it may have been that prosperity scattered sunshine on her path, surrounded her with all the comforts which wealth can secure, and

promised her a rare exemption from the usual assaults of earthly grief and suffering. We can imagine her amiable and benevolent, social and hospitable, beloved for her personal qualities, and honored for the display of every conjugal and maternal virtue. And thus her life may have glided on, with few and light interruptions, while her soul became steeped in the essence of worldliness. She was, of course, a Jewess, and professed to adore the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and doubtless she remained faithful to the letter of the Old Testament, and to the forms of the ceremonial law. But if, in the days of her childhood and youth, the spirit of true religion had ever stirred within her, it had made no deep or durable impression. Her husband and her son had become the real objects of her heart's devotion. And thus she went on in confident self-ignorance, unsuspicious and secure; until the mercy of that divine Redeemer, who saw her danger and had compassion on her though she knew him not, interposed at length, to save her from destruction.

And first the companion of her choice is stricken by disease, and laid prostrate on the bed of mortal languishing. Day after day, and night after night, the faithful wife fulfils her anxious duties—watching and soothing, and longing and fearing, and breathing the words of tender encouragement, and smiling through her tears lest she might depress his spirits, and hoping against hope, till at last the doubtful struggle is decided, and the cherished idol of her youthful affections sleeps in death. O, who can describe the spasm of that grief which tears the very heartstrings with its inward agony, while it stupefies the mind and shows no outward sign of feeling! Who can paint the violence of those emotions which, once let loose from their confinement, burst forth in a storm of tears and lamentations, refusing to be comforted! Her soul devoted to that husband, now lying before her a senseless corpse—practically ignorant of the doctrine of Providence,

and of the duty of submission to the will of God—knowing nothing of those heavenly desires which look to a better world for all real happiness, and seeking no higher enjoyment than that which is now lost for ever—the consciousness of utter desolation, the sense of absolute bereavement, the lonely, gloomy, despairing pang which marks the sudden change from the title of wife to the forlorn name of widow,—all this we can conceive as a subject of intellectual imagery, but nothing save the actual experience can enable us to estimate the misery of such a lot, nor can any power of words communicate its wretchedness to the mind of another.

It may be that the poor Widow of Nain learned from this first deep affliction, the necessity of true religion,—that in the prostration of her worldly hopes she saw how the Lord had been robbed of his rightful worship, and bowed down her head in sorrowful repentance, and cried out, in the humiliation of her soul, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" It may be, that from that day she acquired a higher and a holier view of the Divine character, and began to lead a new life of purer faith and more humble obedience. But granting this, it is also most probable that the sanctifying effects of her heavy trial began, in time, to wear away. She still retained the other object of her tenderness—that only son, who so often recalled to her memory the image of his father. And as he grew up before her to the years of manhood, and gave a fair promise of being her comfort and her stay, it is but too likely that her fond maternal feelings led her heart to wander from the Lord, and rest her happiness again on the frail and brittle reed of earthly affection. And therefore it became necessary to appoint another chastisement from the hand of her compassionate Saviour. This second idol must be also taken; that thus the work of her conversion might be perfected, when she had none to trust in but God alone.

Again she watches by the sick-bed of her sole remaining treasure. But not now as formerly, for she had learned to pray, and knew, in part, the uses of affliction. Yet she could not be resigned to the idea of his death, and all her supplications were for his recovery; and she thought it would be too hard for God to remove the light of her eyes with a stroke, and would not believe that there could be either mercy or benevolence in a blow which should make the widow childless and crush her to the dust, and bring her with a broken heart in sorrow to the grave. She did not know, as yet, how deceitful was that heart, nor how full of the spirit of self-will and rebellion. She did not know, as yet, that she must learn to trust in the Lord with an undoubting confidence, and never wish to dictate to that only perfect wisdom which cannot err. She did not comprehend, as yet, the meaning of the Psalmist when he saith, "Whom have I in heaven but thee: and there is none upon the earth that I desire in comparison of thee. Though my flesh and my heart fail, yet God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever."

But the Lord saw, if she did not, the peril of her condition, and resolved to complete the wholesome discipline of his mercy. The mother's eyes beheld her only son expire before her. His form, just opening into manly vigor and proportion, lay wrapped in the garments of the grave. His lips, which were never opened to her but in the language of filial love, were closed and silent. No more should that active brain devise, no more should those willing hands execute his plans for her comfort. No more should his buoyant step bring pleasure to her ear, nor his voice of music waken up the pulses of her heart's affections. Alas! it was a heavy stroke; but it cut loose the last bond of her earthly idolatry, and she felt that at length she could give her whole soul to God. Humbled and subdued, she fell prostrate before him, and cried, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord." The deep and solemn peace which passeth understanding, descended upon her from above; and henceforth she resolved that she would live as a pilgrim and a stranger upon earth, only anxious to secure the abiding happiness of the kingdom of heaven.

The funeral rites are all prepared. The train sets forward, and the Widow of Nain follows the bier, weeping those gracious tears which are allowed to human grief, when the softened heart is bowed down in pious resignation. But now the Saviour, whose providence had prepared the whole for a sublime testimony of his goodness and his power, meets the sad procession; and reading the mourner's soul and compassionating the submissive spirit of her suffering, addresses her in the encouraging words: WEEP NOT. Then laying his hand upon the bier, the bearers set it down; and while the people gather round, surprised by this unusual interruption, the Lord utters the irresistible command: YOUNG MAN, I SAY UNTO THEE, ARISE! O, it was Omnipotence that spake, and the power of death vanished before it! No more a senseless corpse, but filled with life and vigor, the widow's son rises up and begins to speak. Overcome with amazement and sudden joy, the mother has no strength to rush forward and embrace her recovered treasure; but the Redeemer himself takes him by the hand, and, in the fulness of his condescension, delivers the bewildered youth into the arms of that dear parent, whose love had watched over him from the cradle to the bier. No wonder that fear came upon all who witnessed this stupendous miracle, while some of the astonished crowd exclaimed that "a great Prophet had risen up amongst them;" and others, with still more truth cried out, that "God himself had visited his people."

In the explanation and enlargement of this Scripture narrative, we have endeavored only to supply such facts as accord, on the one

hand, with the great principles of the providential government of the Almighty; and on the other, with the ordinary course of human experience in this world of trial. And now let us mark our own personal interest in their application.

Nothing is more certain, from the reiterated assurances of the word of God, than the great truth, that every event in our mortal life is ordered by the supreme will of our Heavenly Father. He numbers the very hairs of our heads. Nay, without him, even the sparrow doth not fall to the ground. He is about our bed, and about our path, and taketh note of all our ways. In six troubles and in seven he will be with us, causing all things to work together for our good; and his gracious promise is: "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." If, then, there be widowhood and orphanage—if the wife be called to mourn over the early grave of the husband—if the mother be doomed to close the eyes of her beloved and only son—if a countless variety of other sorrows attend our earthly course—the hand of the Lord is in all these afflictions, and they come at his bidding, as the messengers of his will.

But it is equally certain that he has a purpose in appointing these sufferings; and that purpose must needs be in strict accordance with the attributes of his divine character. "The Lord," saith the Scripture, "doth not willingly afflict nor grieve the children of men." As a kind father chasteneth the son in whom he delighteth, even so doth God chasten his spiritual children for their good. It is a grievous error to suppose that our trials can come upon us, without the special will of the Most High; and it is blasphemy outright to say that caprice, or cruelty, or ignorance, or error, can by possibility be charged upon his dispensations. He is possessed of all conceivable perfections. Boundless knowledge, infinite wisdom, immaculate justice, immeasurable power, mercy and love, belong to him, and mark every

step of his divine administration. And therefore, the object of our temporal correction is fully declared by the great Redeemer, when he saith, "through tribulation ye must enter the kingdom of heaven;" for "they who sow in tears shall reap in joy." The same doctrine substantially, was laid down in the Old Testament by the inspired Solomon: "The house of mourning," saith he, "is better than the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart." The design of the Lord then is plain, in ordering our afflictions; for he administers them in pity and compassion, as medicines to our souls; and like a wise physician, administers them only when the disease of sin renders them necessary.

The next remark which is suggested by our narrative is, that one or two of those trials will not suffice to accomplish the merciful purpose of our divine Saviour; just as one or two applications of medicine will not conquer an obstinate disease. So long as the sickness of the body continues, no one would thank his earthly physician for ceasing his unpalatable prescriptions; for the object is to heal the patient, and, therefore, the medicines must be taken until the recovery is complete. The only exception to this rule is in those cases where the disease is utterly hopeless, and the sick are given up as beyond the reach of cure. In like manner, precisely, our Heavenly Physician deals with the diseases of the soul. Affliction after affliction, trial after trial must be administered, because our rebellious self-will remains unconquered, and the carnal affections of the natural heart continue unsubdued. The exception here is on a similar principle; for the Lord ceases to dispense those salutary sufferings to those whom he abandons as incurable, and hence the long course of uninterrupted prosperity sometimes seen in the lives of the ungodly, while religious and pious men, sincere, but still far from perfect holiness, are bowed down from time to time in suffering and sorrow.

But to all who accept aright the dispensations of the Almighty, and thankfully acknowledge the goodness and mercy of the Lord in the day of trial, the language of the gracious Redeemer will be the same which he applied to the humble and contrite heart of the Widow of Nain: WEEP NOT: thine hour of deliverance is at hand, and thy blessings shall be restored to thee. WEEP NOT, for the bitterness of thy grief shall be turned to rejoicing, and thou shalt be made a partaker of the peace which the world can neither give nor take away. WEEP NOT, for those whom thou hast mourned shall rise again, and thou shalt behold them in the glory of the Saviour's kingdom. We are assured in this glorious Gospel, that the same Omnipotent voice shall thrill throughout the darkness of the tomb. The earth and the sea shall give up their dead, the corruptible shall put on incorruption, and the mortal shall put on immortality. Faith shall be changed into perfect knowledge. Hope shall give place to full fruition. Death shall be swallowed up in victory. The Lamb of God who purchased the redemption of his people with his own precious blood, shall feed them, and lead them by the pleasant fountains of waters; and sighs and tears, and sin and sorrow, shall be known no more.

And shall our portion be with these? Have we any evidence that our names shall be found written in the book of life? The question may be answered if we can only read our own hearts aright, for the rule of Scripture lays down the principle: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God;" and again, saith the Apostle, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Now there is no better test, in general, of the influence which the Spirit of Christ has upon us, than the temper in which we bear our portion of earthly sorrow. Many there are in every age of the world, who, like the Widow of Nain, have bowed down beneath the grief of widowhood, and followed to the grave an only son. All of

us have been called, in some measure, to suffer in the bereavement of the objects of our warmest affections. And in a vast variety of other forms, the hand of our Heavenly Father has chastened us for our good. Sickness and pain, loss and disappointment, alienation and hostility, envy and strife, rebellion and ingratitude, poverty and privation, — all are intended to remind us of eternity, to wean us from the world, to break down our secret idolatry, to turn our hearts towards our heavenly inheritance, to teach us where we shall find the only real happiness, and to subdue our pride and self-will to the frame of humble penitence, and absolute dependence on Christ, and fervent prayer, and constant striving after that holiness, without which none shall see the Lord. Surely, therefore, we ought to examine our past lives, and ask ourselves whether such has been the fruit of our tribulations. Blessed shall we be if we can honestly answer in the affirmative; for the Spirit of Christ will then bear witness with our spirit, that we are indeed the children of God. But if it be otherwise — if sorrow has not sanctified, nor chastisement corrected, nor warning instructed us, we may well fear that we have "neither part nor lot in the matter," but are still "in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity."

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Michol

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MICHAL.

BY REV. J. F. STEARNS.

Few monarchs have started on their career in circumstances of greater promise than Saul. Selected by God himself from among all his countrymen, set apart for his high office by one of the greatest of the prophets, noble in person, gifted in intellect, and a general favorite; a brilliant reign seemed to open itself before him. But he proved himself inadequate to his high station. Self-sufficient, jealous, and vindictive, he soon forfeited the respect and confidence of his subjects, and drew down upon him, by his disobedience, the displeasure and rejection of Israel's God.

The reign of Saul had reached its culminating point, and was fast verging to its decline. Samuel, the prophet, who anointed him to be king, had wept over his fall, till Jehovah chode with him for his vain regrets. The fatal sentence had been uttered: "God hath rejected thee from being king," and already the destined successor of his crown, a young Bethlehemite, had received in secret the prophetic blessing and the holy anointing oil. Over Saul's own spirit a dark cloud of melancholy had settled, approaching by fits to madness; and at every movement which he made, a kind of infatuation, the

result of God's desertion of him, seemed to involve him in deeper trouble.

It is in such circumstances, that Michal, the youngest daughter of Saul, makes her appearance on the stage of sacred history:

"Weep, daughter of a royal line,
A sire's disgrace, a realm's decay;
Ah, happy! if each tear of thine
Could wash a father's fault away!"

It was the fortune of Michal to be the connecting link between a falling and a rising dynasty. The princess had set her affections on a young courtier in her father's service. Brave, generous, affectionate, and comely, he was worthy in all respects to possess the heart of a king's daughter. His early youth had been distinguished for its piety; and, in that piety and the attainments to which it was the chief stimulus, were sown the seeds of his future greatness. David was a shepherd's boy. Tending his father's flocks on the plains of Bethlehem, and accustomed to beguile the weariness of his watch with psalms of praise to the God of Israel; the skill which he attained upon the harp, his favorite instrument, commended him to the notice of Saul's servants, who were seeking for a minstrel to allay their master's irritation, in those fearful fits of melancholy, to which his God-forsaken spirit had become subject. In this capacity, he was introduced at court, and became the monarch's favorite.

Whether Michal, at this period, knew and loved David, the sacred narrative does not inform us. Perhaps, even then, the sweet tones of his harp stole their way into her youthful bosom. Perhaps, as the young shepherd armor-bearer retired from the august presence of his sovereign to attend the flocks of his father, the pleasing consciousness

went with him, and other ears than those of Saul had been drinking in his melody, and another heart would be waiting, with loving, longing earnestness, for the hour of his return. Over all this, time has now drawn an impenetrable veil.

The crisis of David's greatness was fast approaching. There was a perilous war going on between Israel and the Philistines. Saul and his princely son Jonathan, the pride of his house, had buckled on their armor, and gone bravely down to the field of battle. But the fortunes of the day were untoward. A mighty giant, Goliath by name, had come forth from the host of the Philistines; and, defying both the armies of Israel and the God in whom they trusted, demanded a champion, who should decide the fate of the war in single combat with himself. All Israel was in dismay; for such a champion could not be found. Saul had issued a proclamation, offering royal gifts and dignities, and, withal, the hand of his own daughter, to the successful combatant. But day followed on after day; and the splendid prize tempted none to venture the perilous endeavor.

At this juncture, young David made his appearance in the camp. He came simply for the purpose of inquiring after the welfare of his elder brothers, soldiers in Saul's army, and bringing them supplies. He saw the Philistine, and heard of the reward which Saul had offered. Surprised at the consternation of the warriors, he inquired, in the simplicity of his heart;—"Who is this Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God? Hath not Jehovah the power?" Then he looked upon the giant's massive form and said;—"I am but a stripling, and he a host in himself. But I remember that God helped me once to slay a lion and a bear, fierce savage beasts as they were. Shall he not make this proud blaspheming boaster as one of them?"

To Saul, the adventure seemed perilously rash; and he would fain have dissuaded the young hero. But resisting all persuasions of

fear, and casting aside the helmet and the mail, with which they would have equipped him, he chose him out five smooth stones from the brook; and, with only a shepherd's sling, confronted the giant warrior. The contrast is sublime. There stand they; David, the stripling, with his sling and bag of stones, and, striding haughty in massive armor, the mighty giant, Goliath of Gath. "Am I a dog, beardless boy?" vaunts the Philistine. "Come to me, and I will give thy tender flesh to the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field." The youth replies, "Thou comest unto me with a sword, and a spear, and a shield. But I come to thee, in the name of the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied." There was a pause. The stripling's hand is on his sling. Swift speeds the smooth stone towards its mark. Guided by Providence, it smites and penetrates the giant's forehead; and, in a moment, Goliath of Gath falls, to rise no more. The army flee; the Israelites pursue. Even to the gates of Ekron and of Gath, the pride of Philistia is laid low.

What honors now await thee, young shepherd warrior! Thou art a nation's hero now, a nation's boast and pride. The damsels of Israel, as they attended the returning victors, chanted the achievements of that day. Saul was a glorious hero. But David, the young stripling David, now attracted all hearts towards himself. And the young maidens smiled with looks of love and admiration, as they sung, answering to each other in alternate bands, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." Rejoice, monarch of Israel, thy dreaded foe can no more trouble thee. Rejoice, the nations of the earth boast no hero, that can rival thy own minstrel boy.

But, in the heart of Saul, no joy thrilled at this event, glorious as it seemed. The serpent envy was there; and, as the song went on, she hissed and reared her hateful crest, and stung his jealous bosom. At every strain, the hated words, "David his ten thousands," smote upon

his ear like the knell of his royalty. What can he have more, said he, but the kingdom? The kingdom? Yes, the kingdom. Little dreamed he that those words were prophecy. "Saul eyed David from that day forth," says the sacred narrative, "and sought occasion to slay him."

But where was Michal, the loving Michal, during these transactions? The soul of her princely brother Jonathan, the heir to the crown, was knit to David's, from that time, in a friendship which has defied all parallel. What hopes or fears beat now in his fair sister's bosom? Did not her heart thrill with unwonted emotions, as she heard, and perhaps joined the song of the damsels of Israel?

Michal had little prospect, at this period, of becoming the wife of David. Perhaps he thought not of her, nor dreamed of her secret love. By the promise of Saul, offering Merab as the prize of victory, his mind had been pre-occupied with another object. That which raised the hopes of his other admirers to the highest point was a death-blow to hers. She must now, as it seemed, relinquish for ever all her fond wishes, and be content to see the object of her love happy in the possession of another than herself.

But how strangely are the events of this world often brought about! By an act of treachery on the part of Saul, as unprovoked as it was wicked, the eldest daughter, whom David had won so nobly, and for whose sake he had submitted to so many vexing delays, and engaged in so many hazardous enterprises, became the bride of another, at the very moment when the fulfilment of the pledge which made her his, could be no longer postponed. The very act which blasted for the time all his hopes of a royal alliance, and mortified his pride in the most sensitive point, prepared the way for a connection, in which all the worldly advantages which he had before

anticipated, should be combined with that far richer and more royal prize — a loving heart.

The secret attachment of Michal now began to discover itself. It was whispered through the royal household, and came to the ears of David and of Saul. To her surprise and joy, it not only met a kind response from the young adventurer who had been hitherto its unconscious object, but was received with favor by her jealous father, and obtained his ready consent.

"She shall be his," said the deceitful monarch. "Cheer up, young hero. It was fit and necessary that the eldest should be given to another; but my royal promise shall be kept with thee, and thou shalt still be the king's son-in-law. Yet win her first. Bring me the trophies of a hundred slaughtered Philistines, and she, the young, the beautiful, the loving, is thine own." The task is undertaken. Twice the number of the bloody spoils are brought and counted out at the king's feet, and the prize won so bravely can be withheld no longer.

The fair young princess had now gained the consummation of her hopes. The hero of the field of Elah, the boast of the nation, and the admiration and praise of all the damsels of Israel, was at length her own. But new troubles awaited her. The jealousy of Saul had been kindled to new fury. He had consented to the marriage with the treacherous hope, that the adventurous bridegroom might fall a victim to his rash bravery in attempting to fulfil its conditions. Or, if not, he flattered himself that his daughter might be made a ready instrument to his own murderous hatred. But when he saw that his intended victim had escaped the snare; that he was enjoying God's favor, growing in popularity with all the nation, and sincerely beloved and cherished by his young bride, — the rage of the monarch knew no bounds. Every day was the affectionate bosom of Michal agitated

with new fear, lest the object of her tenderest regard should fall by the hand of her own father.

Pass we to the house, where the noble pair have taken up their abode. It is night, and within all is still. But who are these, creeping stealthily about the door, in the dim starlight? They are a band of assassins. Saul has given them directions to watch the house during the night, and seize and murder the unsuspecting victim as he attempts to come forth in the morning. But Michal is on the alert. She, whom Saul gave to David that she might be a snare to him, now proves herself an angel of mercy. The morning dawns; but David comes not forth. He is sick, she replies to the inquiring messengers. Bring him hither in his bed, commands the determined monarch. The bed is brought;—the sick man sleeping apparently, with his face covered with a cloth. Burning with rage, Saul seizes a dagger in one hand, and with the other, tears off the covering. Lo, the intended victim is not there! A lifeless image, with its head resting on a bolster of goat's hair, is all that can be found. Michal had let her husband down from a window secretly during the night, and he is now far away beyond the reach of his pursuers.

It was a sad day for her when she was thus forced to part with her beloved husband, and see him driven away into a foreign land, and hunted from cavern to forest "as a partridge on the mountains," by the rage of her unscrupulous father. But she knew not yet all the bitterness of her cup of sorrow. Saul reproached her, angrily, as an unfilial daughter: and since he could not now reach the person of his intended victim, proceeded to inflict, both on him and her, the severest wound which even his malice could invent. He took the faithful wife, in the absence of her husband, and to reward her conjugal fidelity, gave her away hopelessly to another.

Now occurs a long blank in Michal's history. Severed by violence from her rightful husband, she pines, an unwilling and degraded captive, in the house of a stranger. Of her fate during this interval, her hopes and fears, her mortifications and struggles, we know nothing except from conjecture. Perhaps she had succeeded in subduing her wounded love and blunting the edge of her sensibilities; and, soothed by the kindness of her new husband, who seems to have loved her tenderly, forgot in a degree her early attachment. Perhaps the hope of a reunion at some distant day, gleamed occasionally across her spirit, only to leave her in greater discouragement. Little dreamed she then of greeting the hunted exile, as the sovereign of Israel; and sitting beside him, as his queen, on the throne of her father!

But the purposes of God concerning the kingdom were now fast maturing. Saul and his three eldest sons perished together on the heights of Gilboa. The tribe of Judah declared for David; and, after a struggle of seven years,—David all the while becoming stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul weaker and weaker,—the remaining eleven tribes joined their brethren, and David was proclaimed king over all Israel.

But will he now remember the love of his youth? It marks the strength of his attachment, no less than his wise policy; and seems to indicate the loveliness of her person and character, that he would not consent to the proposals offered him for the settlement of the kingdom, except on the condition of her restoration. "Deliver me my wife," said he. "One thing do I require of thee; thou shalt not see my face, except thou first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when thou comest to see my face." It was a sad day to the unhappy man, who had all this while called and thought himself her husband; and who manifested his sincere regard for her, by following the train

which bore her away, weeping as it went. But the king's orders were peremptory, and Michal was at length reinstated in her conjugal rights.

David was now monarch of Israel; and no king reigned with greater glory. The rebellious inhabitants of the yet unreclaimed parts of the promised land were subdued under him. He spread the terror of his arms, and the splendor of his fame all abroad; and not only reigned undisputed over all the realm of Saul, but made his dominion extend over many of the surrounding nations. Happy Michal! She sits a queen upon the throne of her father, beside the man whom her heart chose in the days of his obscurity.

But some sad changes, as well as some flattering ones, had come over the condition of the royal pair since their separation. Michal finds neither her home, nor her husband, nor herself, the same as before. No longer is she the undisputed mistress of David's royal heart. No longer do his fresh affections respond as of yore, undivded, to her every look of love. Polygamy, that curse of the domestic life of antiquity, has been throwing over their home its baleful influence. Other hearts than hers now share her lord's affections; and their claims, even she, though a king's daughter and a first-love, may not dispute. Worse than all, in the vicissitudes through which she has passed, her own mind has undergone some deterioration. She was Saul's daughter, and the curse of Saul's evil character seems at length to have begun to display itself in her own disposition and conduct. Michal's grand defect was the want of piety; and this, as we shall see in the sequel, marred, and gradually undermined all the excellencies of her character; and unfitted her for that high station, to which, as the wife of David and the mother of such a dynasty as God was founding in him, she might otherwise have been destined.

David, as we have seen already, was a man of devoted piety. No victory so thrilled his heart; no triumphs or tokens of royalty so delighted him, as the service of Jehovah, his faithful covenant-keeping God. The pleasure which he felt when a shepherd's boy, celebrating God's praises alone upon the harp, was now renewed and heightened; as a splendid choir, set in order by his own munificence, chanted those same praises with all sorts of the most exquisite instruments. He was a monarch, but he was such only by Divine interposition; and, in his acknowledgments of the Divine favor, he deemed no degree of humiliation incompatible with his regal dignity.

It was a day of special religious joy. The ark of God, the symbol of Jehovah's presence, hitherto lodged in a private house, was now to be brought in solemn pomp to its appointed place on Mount Zion. David was overflowing with gladness. God was now coming, as it seemed to him, to dwell in very deed in his own city, crowning all his victories, and fulfilling the precious promises of the covenant. It was a splendid scene. The Levites, in their sacred robes, attended in solemn procession. The priests were all at their posts. Choirs of musicians made the air ring with music, such as Israel never heard before. Some struck the cymbals, some touched the psalteries and harps, some praised Jehovah with the song. The trumpets pealed. The blood of bullocks and of rams flowed freely. All Israel, with their chiefs, from Sihor of Egypt even to the entering in of Hamath, were in attendance, an unnumbered throng. David, their king, put off the vestments of royalty, and covered his person with a simple robe of pure white linen; and, when the musicians played upon their instruments, and the singers sang, and the people shouted, David also lifted up his voice of joy, and, in the excess of his enthusiasm, "danced before the Lord with all his might."

Where now is Michal? Is she mingling with the choirs of women

to enjoy and heighten the pomp of that glorious day? When the daughters of Israel sing and dance beside their monarch, is Israel's noblest daughter proud to distinguish herself, as among the most enthusiastic of them all? No! Michal is not there. Glance your eye towards that window. There stands the royal lady, with her form half concealed, gazing on the scene. Why there? What thoughts occupy her? The scene perhaps was too exciting for her to mingle in,—the joy too great. Or, she has seized upon that post of observation, and is looking down, admiringly, upon her royal husband; now not a king or conqueror only, but a saint of God! "There stands my hero," exclaims she, "in the height of his glory. He seemed glorious, when the daughters of Israel sung the triumphant chant, as he returned from the slaughter of the Philistine. Proud was my loving heart, as I saw him second to none in my father's household. Still prouder, when he owned me as his queen, the wife of his youth not forgotten, when all Israel submitted themselves to his sceptre. But now, proudest of all, I see the honors of Heaven smybolized by those white robes in which he ministers, eclipsing by their superior splendor, all the glories of an earthly throne. Not the purple of Tyre's haughty monarch seems half so royal, as that plain linen garment. Nor the nod of the haughtiest despot shows such dignity, as the exulting dance of my monarch-saint." But no! Such thoughts rove not through the breast of Michal. Mortification is there; scornful pride corrodes her heart. Michal, Saul's daughter and David's earliest love, is looking down upon that scene with contempt!

The pomp was ended. The music and the dancing ceased. The ark was settled in its place. David distributed to all the people tokens of his bounty; and when the royal blessing was pronounced, all Israel returned to their several homes.

The monarch retired to his. He had blessed his subjects: now must he bless his own family, and find repose in their sympathy. Who comes to meet him as he approaches? It is Michal; she who, beyond all others, shared with him the fearful vicissitudes of which this day is the joyful completion. From her he might expect the intensest sympathy, especially in the matter of his piety. But what says she? Brace thy nerves, monarch of Israel. Steel thine heart for a stab. "How glorious was the king of Israel to-day, who uncovered himself to-day in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself!" And is it so? Little did David dream of a rebuff like this at his own door. His answer is memorable. "It was before the Lord; who chose me before thy father and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over his people, over Israel; therefore will I play before the Lord." Had the scene been one of worldly mirth, she might well have reproached him for compromising his kingly dignity. But God is higher than kings. Monarchs are dust and ashes in his sight. "And I will yet be," he proceeds, "more vile than this, and will be base in mine own sight; and of the maid-servants whom thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honor."

Unhappy Michal! The secret mischief of her character, so long kept back by the force of circumstances, has now fairly discovered itself. Many excellent qualities, unquestionably, adorned her nature. Her warm and susceptible heart beat quick responses to the claims of an earthly love. Her conjugal fidelity triumphed over danger, and enabled her to face, without shrinking, the ire of her half-mad and unscrupulous father; and, when the jealous monarch would have stained his hands with the blood of a son, she, by her intrepidity, her quick invention and her prompt action, both saved him from the curse

of murder, and rescued her husband from an untimely death. For all this, she gained a worthy reward, in the attachment and enduring devotion of him to whom her heart had been given.

But Michal was a worldly woman. Not one humble prayer, one holy vow, one song of praise and thanksgiving, one sigh of penitence, or one acknowledgment of the claims of God over human hearts, is recorded as having passed her lips. The spirit of her father, who favored religion only when it might subserve his own purposes, and not that of her husband, with whom God's service was the chief end of life, ruled in her heart. The ardor of her husband's piety was a mortification to her. Like many in humbler spheres, she deemed the enthusiasm of a devout worshipper beneath the dignity of a man of eminence. Even her conjugal affection bowed to this false shame; and, to add keenness to her ungodly reproaches, she could misinterpret her husband's conduct, representing his simple robe of white linen, as a shameless uncovering of himself; and his holy exultation as the revels of the shameless fellows.

Who would have dreamed of this, when youth and beauty, and the fervor of young love clothed her with their charms? But these, without religion, are but fading graces. Like the charms which sometimes linger around the features of the dead, they may seem life-like for a while; but, dust they are, and unto dust they must return. There can be little permanent happiness in the conjugal state, where the union is not cemented by a community of feeling in respect to the most sacred relations of the soul. Fair daughter of Saul, thy charms are indeed faded now! The gold has become dim, and the most fine gold changed!

Saul's house seems to have been a doomed house, from the day when he forsook God and was forsaken of him. Awhile it seemed as if one living branch of that degenerate stock might still flourish

bearing an ingrafted scion of a better tree. But God had otherwise designed. The house of David might support itself awhile upon the remnant of Saul's, till its foundations were secured and its buttresses erected. Then must the last vestige of the ungodly king perish, and no heir of his succeed.

We have said that the curse of Saul's character was upon Michal; and so, as we see presently, was that of his destiny. In the closing scenes of this queen's life, we seem to hear the same sentence pronounced upon her, which sounded such a knell in the ears of her unhappy father, "God hath rejected thee!" No son of thine shall sit upon the throne of David; no scion of thy stock shall bear "the Righteous Branch." A rod shall come forth out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots, but it shall not be thine.

Michal was childless, by God's special frown for her impiety, else, as the natural heir of both crowns, her son would have had the fairest claim to the succession. But to solace her loneliness, and perhaps to furnish, out of her own family, a probable heir to the throne, she had adopted as her own the sons of her elder sister. There was a famine in the land; for Saul's treacherous dealings with the Gibeonites, a race of menials with whom Israel was in covenant to leave them unmolested in the midst of the nation, had drawn down the displeasure of Heaven. The Gibeonites must be avenged. We cannot stop to discuss the moral bearings of the transaction. Doubtless they are complicated. Suffice it to say, the demand of the Gibeonites, that seven sons of Saul should be given up to them for execution, in expiation of the cruelties of that cruel family, was conceded. Seven men were sought for; and, Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, David's special friend, being exempted for his father's sake, there remained only the two sons of Saul by Rispah, the daughter of Aiah, and the five adopted sons of Michal, children of her elder sister.

Sad was the day when these seven brave youths perished in their prime! The veil is drawn gloomily over the fallen dynasty; the rejection is consummated; and from this time forth, Michal disappears from sacred history.

We close this sketch in sadness, as we were compelled to begin it. The morning lowered with clouds around the head of this royal lady. But the sun broke through at length; and, the tempest being still, bade fair to ride on in splendor through a bright and lovely day. But the evening shadows gathered long ere the day was spent, and night without a star, shuts up the mournful view.

Michal, like Saul, stands on the sacred page, as an example of slighted privileges. By the favor of God, she was brought very near to the kingdom of heaven, and had the strongest inducements to enter it. But she refused; and that sinful choice spread its blight over her whole destiny.

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Martha

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MARTHA.

BY REV. ROBERT A. HALLAM.

Of the personal history of Martha we know little. She was the sister of Lazarus and Mary, and dwelt in the village of Bethany, near Jerusalem: where together, they formed a household. She was probably the elder sister, and head of the domestic establishment; for it is said of her by St. Luke, that *she* received Jesus into *her* house. Beneath their hospitable roof our Lord often sojourned; and their uniform attachment and sympathy forms one of the brightest spots in the history of the Man of sorrows. Their dwelling was his nightly resort during his last visit to Jerusalem; and in their behalf he wrought that stupendous and touching miracle, which so exasperated the enmity of the priesthood, that it led to his arrest and condemnation. Into their bosoms he was wont to pour out his sorrows, and from their kindness to experience consolation and relief. A member of such a family cannot fail to be regarded with interest by Christian bosoms.

And in Martha we have presented to view a phase of female goodness, which, if it be less lovely and attractive than that of her sister, is still not without its points of interest and excellence, nor

incapable of affording us instruction as well as admonition. Mary's was the contemplative form of piety, Martha's the practical; Mary delighted most in devotion, Martha in activity; the seat of Mary's religion was more the inner, of Martha's, more the outer life. A difference of nature had doubtless much to do with the spiritual unlikeness. So we see it continually. Godliness is every where modified by the previous bent and habit of nature; and the original cast of character continues always to influence and distinguish the development of the work of grace. The spiritual world presents the same variety of feature and expression as the natural. Men are no more made alike by grace than by nature, only by the one they are all rendered holy, as by the other they are all made human. But the forms and guises of holiness are many and various. The end of sanctification is not to reduce humanity to a tame and level sameness, or put upon it an aspect of dull and monotonous uniformity. It only consecrates the diversity that it finds, and communicates to all its variations a common tincture of the heavenly and divine. In some, thought and feeling will predominate; in others, action and performance. Their sanctification consists in this, that without destroying their dissimilarity, it has consecrated them alike to the service of God. Under its control, sentiment will be holy sentiment, activity holy activity; and whether the inward or the outward life be the more busy and intense, the image of God is imprinted upon it, and the service of God has become its object and its end. Mary, sitting at the Saviour's feet, and Martha, occupied with domestic cares, is each a study worthy of consideration, and in some points, of imitation and praise. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit." There is room in the family of Christ for every species of service to which the constitutional differences of men adapt and prompt them. And the common field of these joint but various labors is by their very

diversity rendered at once more beautiful and more productive, a more cheerful scene for laborers and for beholders, more prolific of good to men and glory to God.

The religion of contemplation and of activity has each its characteristic excellencies and faults, its advantages and its dangers. The Scripture narrative brings to light the happier side of the one in the case of Mary, and the less favorable of the other in that of Martha. And yet we ought not to infer that the one character is the subject of indiscriminate praise, nor the other of utter and unqualified condemnation. Jesus, it is written, loved Martha as well as Mary; for she, as truly as her sister, was a real disciple, his faithful follower and affectionate friend; and if, once, her ill-directed assiduity and over-ambitious zeal drew from his lips words of gentle admonition and reproof, it was not because he did not see and recognize in her a loving and faithful heart, but because he would fain guard her against the dangers peculiarly incident to her constitution, and with the holy jealousy of an enlightened and discriminating affection, indicate and check in her the earliest symptoms of aberration and decay. In the active temperament of Martha the service of her Master was too liable to degenerate into display and secularity, shrouding themselves from her own notice under the specious guise of an earnest and laborious devotedness; and meaner motives and more selfish tempers than she would have been willing to harbor, or ready to acknowledge, to creep insensibly into a heart too busy with the outward, to heed as it ought the condition of the inward. He saw the peril and the delusion, and administered a kind and timely rebuke:—"Martha! Martha! Thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful." On hospitable cares intent, anxious to prove her attachment to her guest, and a little, to exhibit her own good housewifery and hospitality, by the utmost sumptuousness her means or her labor

could effect, indignant that Mary on so important an occasion had withdrawn herself from her share of those preparations, by which, mistakenly, in her own mind, that importance was to be gauged and manifested, and had left her to serve alone, in order that she might sit at the feet of Jesus and hear his word, she came to him with words of complaint and accusation against her sister. But Jesus only replied to her with a mild reproof of her own too anxious and engrossing activity, and a gentle commendation of Mary's more spiritual and acceptable attentions. Martha was a busy, bustling, notable, ambitious person. Her activity was well, but it was in this instance ill-timed and ill-directed; it was not seasoned as it ought to have been with thought and self-communion; and therefore under the cover of it the world crept in to debase her motives and ruffle her temper. And yet we ought not to forget that Mary's cast of character had its dangers too, as well as Martha's,—its own special tendency to evil, to a different evil to be sure, but one not less pernicious or less inconsistent with spiritual health and Christian usefulness. We do not know that she ever fell into it, but she was certainly liable to it. The danger on either side lies in a too exclusive following of the characteristic bent, a too engrossing culture of the favorite form of goodness. As the result, the symmetry and vigor of the character are lost, and feebleness and corruption engendered. The spiritual man loses proportion and strength. A beauty turns into a deformity and disease. Contemplation degenerates into vague, dreamy, indolent sentimentalism; activity into unthinking, shallow, mechanical bustle. Contemplation, in a nature that favors it, may be allowed so far to predominate, as to communicate to the character a distinguishing form and aspect, a visible stamp and signature; but it must ally itself with actions in order to remain safe, healthy, and pure. Action, too, may have its special votaries it is the department of

goodness in which some are chiefly formed to excel, in which they are mainly to find their enjoyment, and earn their praise. But if it be not fed and illuminated by a due measure of study and meditation, by frequent and familiar dealing with those high truths in which are found the sources of Christian feeling and the springs of Christian endeavor, it grows pragmatical and conceited, or else nerveless and unsteady; in fine, becomes a mere superficial imitation and a cheat. A Mary, who is *always* sitting at the feet of Jesus, and never busy in the duties of her station, is but a useless visionary and an unprofitable dreamer. And a Martha, who to her industry and efficiency in the duties of her place, joins a suitable attention to the means of spiritual instruction and enlivening, is a far more excellent and attractive specimen of the power of godliness. But a Martha, who is too busy to read, to think, to feel, may flourish in a loud and showy profession of religion, but she can know little of the true inward power of the Christian life.

An Apostle's advice runs, "Add to your faith virtue;" but he immediately subjoins, "and to virtue knowledge." The conjunction in neither case is accidental. The divorce which is the opposite of it is in either case disastrous. Faith without virtue — that is, a holy energy and principle of virtuous action — what is it but a pretty and unsubstantial vision? Virtue without knowledge, not informed by those guiding lights which shine upon the path of man from "the ingrafted word," — what is it but a brilliant meteor, erratic, transitory, deceptive, appearing for a little time, working good, if at all, by happy accident, and as often evil under the semblance of good, and vanishing at last without enduring or truly valuable fruits. Religious persons of a contemplative cast are always liable to become absorbed in barren and unprofitable thought; and are prone to surround themselves with an atmosphere of dreams, peopled with forms in which

fancy alone has clothed the facts and objects of eternity, and to revel in the luxury of religious revery. To such the cares and duties of actual life become a burden; the world a huge impertinence, its beauties dim, its labors contemptible. Unnerved and inefficient for the purposes of their present being, such persons are wholly idle and unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ. The proper antagonist and remedy of this evil is action. And yet, the balance of the Christian character may be as fatally destroyed by an undue leaning in that direction. Outward doings may also too much absorb the life; and, under a show of fidelity, and exactness, and industry, without a sufficient scrutiny of the springs by which they are actuated, pass themselves off for the love and obedience of God, while they generate spiritual pride and self-righteousness in the heart. To run the round of customary duties with exemplary faithfulness and punctuality, and be ever ready to engage in the performance of unusual tasks at the bidding of what seems to be religious zeal; and all with so little religious reflection or feeling, as to differ little in spirit from the selfish and secular activity of the world; becomes too often a substitute for a high principled and enlightened obedience, sometimes in such a private sphere as Martha's, sometimes in more public walks and ways. The one is what Mary with her tendencies might have been, but was not; the other, what Martha need not have been, but was.

To woman, as well as to man, there is an active part assigned in the business of life. Its special sphere is home, a private, secluded, narrow arena of action; but not on that account the less truly dignified, important, and holy. It is her office, in the expressive language of St. Paul, to "guide the house," to be in her own department its lawgiver, pattern, and teacher; and in the direction and performance of the duties that specially pertain to it, homely and humble though they be in outward guise, to put forth an influence most powerful and

salutary, fraught with good not only to households, but to states and nations, pertaining not merely to time but to eternity. Therein lies her true happiness, usefulness, and glory. How much the formation of character in the young, and the effective exercise of the powers in the more mature life of husbands, sons, and brothers, depends upon the order and comfort of the domestic state, as they are infused into it and maintained in it by the pervading presence and irresistible influence of wise, faithful, virtuous womanhood, who can tell? It is the woman who "openeth her mouth with wisdom," and whose "tongue is the law of kindness;" who "looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness;" whose "husband," or son, or brother, as it may be, cheered by her sympathy, strengthened by her counsel, animated by her example, "is known in the gates when he sitteth among the elders of the land;" is the useful and respected, oftentimes the eminent and distinguished citizen. On the other hand, not a few of the failures, not a little of the vice that deform and sadden the face of society, are fairly attributable to the discomforts and discouragements of a home rendered repulsive by female levity, inanity, negligence and folly. Neatness, order, diligence and skill in the appropriate offices of her station, are woman's richest ornaments, of great price in the sight of God and of man. Never let her scorn, then, that in which lies her true respectability and power; in the possession and enjoyment of which she need not envy kings and sages, clothed with an influence more effectual and benign than theirs. Let her never stoop to be an idle toy and embellishment, to waste her life in dawdling and frivolity, and think it dignity. Nor let her aim at a glory, which indeed is no glory, in seeking to be that which Providence never meant her to be — the rival of man in the different but not more honorable functions of his station. Ah! home, — here is woman's sphere; and in it her work

her honor, and her usefulness. Let her not despise it, nor fill it slightingly. Let none contemn her in it. There is a beauty and a true nobility in it, well and faithfully occupied, which leaves her nought to desire, and man nothing to disdain.

But then, the sphere of woman's influence and honor, is also her theatre of exposure and peril. So indeed it is with every condition of life. Her dangers arise out of her duties. Her difficulty lies in the necessity of being at once "not slothful in business," and "fervent in spirit" in "serving the Lord;" to serve, and, if need be, serve much, and not be "cumbered about much serving;" to attend to many things, and not be sinfully "careful and troubled about many things," and slacken her regard for that "one thing" which is alone essentially "needful;" to be a Martha in her diligence, and not to be a Martha in her undue engrossment and solicitude. Ah! this is the Christian woman's danger,—in the cares of a wife, a mother, the mistress of a household, to grow unspiritual and worldly; to forget the keeping of her heart, and, priding herself on the exactness and fidelity with which she discharges the duties of her place, grow self-satisfied in herself, and captious in regard to others. The remedy is to be found in an equally punctual and diligent regard for the duties of private religion, in sitting daily at the feet of Jesus to hear his word; and going daily to the throne of his heavenly grace for light, refreshment, and strength. "Martha! Martha! thou art careful and troubled about many things. One thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

C. Sinal. W. H. Mote.

Mary Magdalen.

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MARY MAGDALENE.

BY NICHOLAS MURRAY, D. D.

The Bible contains many brilliant narratives of the piety, and of the faith of woman. If first in transgression, she has never been last in the works of faith, and labor of love. Nobly has she labored under both dispensations, and in every age, to erase from the earth the traces of the curse of which she was to so great a degree the cause. In that brilliant chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which Paul so eloquently depicts the power of faith, we find the name of Sarah on the same roll with that of Enoch, Noah and Abraham;—and that of Rahab with those of Moses, and Joseph, and Joshua, and Gideon, and Samuel, and David. And may it not be that it was in a wise deference to Eastern feeling as to woman, that he omits the names of Rachel, and Jochebed, and Hannah, and Esther, and Ruth, and Deborah, and Abigail, and the woman of Shunem, when he crowds into such a glorious galaxy the names of so many men whose faith was no more illustrious than theirs? Woman illustrates every page of Jewish history by her courage, fortitude, and faith.

And such also is the fact, as to the New Testament history. Commencing with Mary, the mother of our Lord, what a remarkable

display of faith, fidelity, and heroic devotion, do we find in the females connected with the history of Christ and his Apostles, and with the collecting and planting of the first churches! Every where, kind and attentive to the Saviour,—every where, sitting under his teaching—along the whole track of his public ministry seeking from him cures for their sick, with characteristic earnestness,—last at the cross, first at the grave,—every where, the helpers of the Apostles in their arduous labors, the Christian Scriptures bear the most emphatic testimony to the heroism of their faith. And, perhaps, in all the Bible there is not a woman whose faith and piety shine more brightly than do those of Mary Magdalene, whose simple and beautiful history as drawn by the "beloved disciple," we have in the 20th chapter of the Gospel of St. John.

To a brief history of this woman, and a brief statement of the lessons which it teaches, we now invite the attention of our readers.

She is called Magdalene, because she resided in the little village of Magdala, which lay on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias, where it is said, she was a plaiter of hair for vain and wicked women. So great a sinner was she, that she is said to have been possessed by "seven devils," which were cast out by the Saviour. This some interpret literally; others, figuratively, as expressive of her great sinfulness and forgiveness. She was, doubtless, the woman who in the house of Simon, the Pharisee, washed the feet of Jesus with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head. Simon thought that the admission of her to such familiarity was an evidence, either that the Saviour knew not her character, or that he was not sufficiently strict in his conduct. This was the occasion of the inimitable parable of the "two debtors." She was forgiven much, and she loved much. After her conversion she attended him on his journeys, and ministered to him of her substance. She attended him on his last journey from

Galilee to Jerusalem, and was a deeply affected witness of all the scenes connected with his death. She was among the disciples who thronged the hall of the High Priest during his trial, and her heart melted, like wax before the flame, when she heard the Holy One condemned to death on perjured testimony. She followed him to the cross. And as she looked upon the dying struggle, and heard the words, "it is finished," uttered by his parched and quivering lips,—and saw him bow his head, and give up the ghost, her love was kindled into a flame.

The crucifixion scene is over. The tragedy of Calvary closes amid the hiding of the light of the sun, and the convulsions of nature, and the coming forth of the dead! Jesus died the just for the unjust. And whilst his body is taken in one direction for its burial, Mary retires in another, to prepare and mix spices and ointments for embalming it. She poured precious ointment upon him whilst living; he is not to be forgotten now that he is dead. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it."

Men cannot tell us what it is to love. They might as well attempt to paint a sound. It is an affection which demonstrates its own power; and the force of that demonstration is only known by those in whose bosom the affection lives. Love knows no fear. No barrier can arrest it. Through floods and flames it will press its way in the pursuit of its object. And the love of woman is proverbially strong. That of Mary bore her above all fear. The sepulchre where Jesus was laid was removed at some distance from the city; and regardless of all danger she went forth, whilst it was yet dark, on the first day of the week, to his grave. Alone, she went through the silent streets—to a spot particularly gloomy, and where even the philosophic mind is filled with fairy visions—and to a grave guarded by Roman soldiers, and that she might find in the place of the dead

the body of her Lord. Finding the stone removed from the sepulchre, and the body of Jesus not there, overwhelmed with sorrow, she ran to his disciples, saying, "They have taken away the Lord, and we know not where they have laid him." How often do we sorrow over that which should be a cause of joy! The disciples, excited by the narrative, run to the sepulchre, and find the fact to be as stated by Mary. Peter seems, at first, to have doubted: "for as yet they knew not the Scriptures, that he must rise from the dead." And having satisfied themselves that Jesus was risen, and having now received the doctrine of the resurrection as actually achieved, "the disciples went again to their own homes."

But how different is the conduct of Mary! Moved by stronger affection, she remained behind — chained to the spot where her Saviour had lain. The picture as drawn by the beloved disciple, is touching in the extreme: — "She stood without at the sepulchre, weeping; and as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre." What a subject for the pencil of an Angelo! The beloved of her soul was crucified, and her heart was broken. There was the spot where had lain his bleeding and torn body. The very spot had a charm for her. Others might go away, and amid other scenes and duties find a balm for their wounded spirits; but to Mary the very grave of her Lord was dear; and thinking that, after all, his body might be there, she stooped down and looked into it. Although deserted by others, and surrounded by dangers calculated to excite her timid heart, yet so completely was she occupied by sorrows for her Saviour as to be regardless of all else.

Whilst thus weeping, stooping, desponding, angelic voices address her from the sepulchre, saying, "Woman, why weepest thou?" "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him," was the prompt and sorrowing reply. When speak-

ing to the disciples it was "*the* Lord;" now it is "*my* Lord." Love is appropriating. Turning round she sees in the gray twilight of the morning the outlines of a man, who asks in rapid succession, "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she thus passionately addresses him: "Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said unto her, "Mary." Startled into ecstasy by the well-known voice, and turning round, she rushes towards him, crying out, "Rabboni, which is to say, Master." What a subject again, for the pencil of an Angelo! Forbidding her to touch him, and having announced to her his resurrection, he sent her to his disciples with this message: "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God." And with her tears all wiped away, and her heart relieved from the weight of its sorrows, and her countenance radiant with commingling joy and hope, she announced to the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and told them the things that he had spoken to her.

We shall now state a few of the lessons taught by this remarkable narrative of this most interesting woman.

I. *It teaches us the true effect of saving grace upon the conduct.* By saving grace we mean the work of the Spirit renewing the soul after the image of God. This work of the Spirit not only enlightens the understanding so that spiritual things are seen in a true light, but it also gives the will and the affections an irresistible inclination towards them. It is above nature, it is above moral suasion; it is the effect of the power which created the world.

Connected with this subject, are many questions difficult of solution. What is the spirit of man? How does God act upon spirit? In what does the change consist? Christ thus answers these and similar questions:—"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and

thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." That is, you may be ignorant as to the causes and course of the winds, but you see their effects. They move the trees of the forest;—they lash the ocean into tempest. The evidences of their power are not unfrequently strown over earth and ocean. And such is the fact as to the Divine influence upon the soul. We may not understand the method of its operation, but the results are read of all men.

How strongly is all this illustrated in the case of Mary! She is described as a poor woman, in the lowest condition of her sex; whose sins were of a crimson dye; as bodily and spiritually under the dominion of Satan. But the possessed of seven devils is made a subject of grace, and an heir of glory. And how great the change in her conduct! With the entire devotion of her whole heart, she attended upon her Lord. His feet she washed with her mingling tears of pity and joy, and wiped them with the hair of her head, which is the glory of woman. Nor did her affection for him abate when he was accused as a melefactor—when condemned for blasphemy—when crucified between two thieves. She was last at the cross; and having prepared spices for his embalming, she was first at his grave, to perform this last act of affection. The darkness of the night—the danger of the way—the distance from the city—the loneliness of the place—the presence of a rude soldiery excited no fear. No danger could deter her from manifesting her love for her Lord. And such, in kind, is the effect of saving grace upon all hearts. And multitudes of her sex, in every age, have manifested a devotion to the Saviour of men only less conspicuous than that of Mary because less known.

II. *It teaches us the honor with which God crowns the exercises of simple faith.* Faith is the saving grace. This truth cannot be too

often asserted in a world where the human heart so universally inclines to the doctrine of merit. "He that believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved;" and every instance of the simple exercise of faith, should be held forth for universal instruction and imitation.

The case of Mary is a beautiful illustration of it. Her sins were great, but they were freely forgiven. And from the hour of her forgiveness until she passes from our view, her simple faith is conspicuous. She followed her Saviour through Judea, sitting at his feet whenever he spoke the words of truth; his instructions falling upon her soul as the rain upon the mown grass. When her Lord was accused as a malefactor, her faith never wavered. She followed him to the hall of Pilate, and to the summit of Calvary. And when the last deep groan by which his sufferings were brought to a termination, escaped his lips, and his head bowed in death, her faith failed not. When the unbelieving Jews wagged their heads in derision—when the sorrowing disciples went away, not knowing yet but that his death was the end of all they hoped for through him, she stood at a distance gazing upon the scene, mourning, but yet believing. There she stood until Joseph took his body from the cross. Nor did she then go away. She followed in the procession to the new-made tomb in the rock, and saw his body wrapped in clean linen and laid away to its burial. Whilst these last offices were performing, she, with the other Mary, sat over against the sepulchre, weeping, but yet believing. Waiting and worshipping through the Sabbath, she hastened to the tomb, whilst it was yet dark on the morning of the first day of the week, for the purpose of embalming him, undismayed by all the dangers to which she was exposed. O Mary, great was thy faith!

And behold the way in which God honors it. As she approached the sepulchre, she found the great stone rolled away from its mouth.

Here is one difficulty removed. Looking in vain for her Lord, angels announce to her his resurrection. This glorious truth she is first honored in knowing—she first announces it to his disciples! And she is honored with the first sight of her risen Lord! It is expressly recorded, that "he appeared first to Mary Magdalene." What the eye and ear of Jesus had alone seen and heard, he would have recorded to the end of the world; and he would exhibit, in this woman, his peculiar regard for the exercise of simple faith under the most trying circumstances. And to all succeeding generations, Mary will stand forth a monument of the blessedness of those who, amid the trials and discouragements of the present mortal state, exercise a simple implicit trust in the Lord.

The Lord is nigh to all those that call upon him. He has graciously promised to be found of all those that seek him aright. Though at all times nigh to those that seek him, he is often hidden from them behind some providential dispensation; but he will soon reveal himself and teach us, as he did Mary, that they who truly seek him shall not seek him in vain. Clouds cannot always obscure the sun. The anger of a kind father does not always burn. Christ is ever more ready to be found of his people, than they are to seek him. See him meeting his disciples at the sea when weary with rowing—see him meeting with Daniel when weeping and fasting—and with John when an exile on Patmos. Mary only sought the dead body of her Lord, but she found him alive, for evermore, to the joy and rejoicing of her soul! What encouragements to seek the Lord until we find! Weeping may continue for a night, but joy will come in the morning.

III. *It teaches us the true way of seeking Christ.* When found of Mary, Christ had but just risen; he had not yet ascended. With all the ardor of her soul, she ran to embrace him; but he repels her

with what appears, at first sight, an unwonted and unnecessary abruptness, saying to her, "Touch me not." What does this mean? Why thus chill the flow of the warm current of her affections? Mary, perhaps, felt that it was enough for her to find her risen Lord, and was about casting herself at his feet, and clinging to his mere bodily presence. But he means to say to her, "Mary, there is something better than my bodily presence,—you must look to a crucified, risen, ascended Saviour, and to a sanctifying Spirit. And go tell my brethren that I am risen from the dead,—that I am alive for evermore." This we may regard as the meaning of our Lord, until we are furnished with a better.

How exactly do Satan, and superstition and error, teach the opposite of all this? They endeavor to attract the mind and the heart from the spiritual to the visible—from the work of Christ to the worship of his pictures, and bowing at his name—from heaven to earth—from the truth to the form by which it is expressed. Men are fond of gods which they can see;—and, hence, Satan is ever dressing up something in gaudy trappings, and covering it with gewgaws, and calling it by a religious name, and is ever saying to our sensual race, "these be thy gods, O Israel." But of his devices in these respects we should not be ignorant. To seek Christ aright, we must not look for him in the tomb—nor yet upon the cross—nor yet in the flesh. We must seek him in his word—and rest upon his finished work—and trust to his all prevalent intercession. Many, like Mary, would cling to his person and presence, but his work for us, and the work of his Spirit in us, alone avail in our behalf as sinners.

In every age, the character of a consummate general and victorious leader of armies, has been the glory of man. To return from the field of battle, wearing the wreath of victory, has been considered immortality sufficient. And those who have attained this character,

have revelled amid the adorations of the multitude. Such was an Alexander, who, after conquering the world, sighed for other worlds to conquer. Such was a Cæsar, who, after subduing the enemies of his country, enslaved Rome. Such was a Bonaparte,

> —— "the man of thousand thrones,
> Who strewed our earth with hostile bones,"

and who, by the splendor and rapidity of his achievements, filled the world with his fame. The glory of influencing men by the powers of eloquence, in the Senate house, the Legislative hall, or in the assemblies of the people, has been intensely sought by man. And a few have attained it. The names of a Demosthenes and a Cicero have become household words. The one awoke Greece to concert against Philip; —the other saved his country from the arts of a Catiline. And the forensic fame of a Burke, a Pitt, a Fox, a Henry, a Pinckney, has gone out into all the earth. So the possession of wealth, because of the pomp and circumstance which it sustains, has been the glory of man. And to obtain it men have dared all dangers, and have searched all climes. But grace is the glory of woman. A true and fervent faith is her crown of glory. These raised Mary from the lowest position of her sex, to the very highest to which mortals ever attain. Without these, all the other accomplishments of woman are but "as the flower of the grass."

G. Staal. F. Holl.

Bathsheba.

New-York, D. Appleton & Co. 200, Broadway.

BATHSHEBA.

BY REV. R. S. STORRS, JR.

THERE are some persons the sketch of whose character and history, though unaccompanied, perhaps, by a line of description, presents them to our thoughts with almost the distinctness of a visible Presence. We have never seen them. We have no means of verifying or amending the conception we have formed. Yet that conception is so definite, the image presented to the mind is so vivid and personal, that we rely on its correctness, and should be materially disturbed in our associations by finding it erroneous. Sometimes these persons are contemporaneous with ourselves, but remote from us in space:—the celebrated men of other countries; the lovely or heroic women, whose acts of piety and charity, or of literary devotion, are to be gems in the records of distant nations. More often they are those of other centuries; who long ago passed into "the dark Backward, and Abysm of time," and of whom there remain but few memorials. They are not, usually, persons whose history has been recorded with great minuteness of detail. They are those, rather, the prominent scenes of whose tragic or brilliant life have been graphically outlined by a few swift touches of the recording pen, and who thus

stand before our thoughts, against the background of distance or of the past, like the figures portrayed in the illustrations of Retzsch.

One of these persons, whose image becomes continually clearer to our thoughts as we contemplate her history, is BATHSHEBA, the subject of this sketch; the daughter of Eliam — or, as the name was sometimes reversed, Ammiel; the bride of Uriah; the wife subsequently of David; and the mother of Solomon, his favorite and successor. The record concerning her is exceedingly brief. It occupies scarcely a twelfth part of a single one of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament. Yet it is so dense, so graphic, so full of life, so singularly impressive in its sketch of her history, that before we are aware, as we meditate upon it, her image is before us. As in the magical goblet of the Eastern sage, the patient gazer was said to discern in the perturbed solution the features and forms of the absent and the lost; so, as we look into the narrative of Bathsheba, from out the crowd of whirling and confused images pertaining to the same era, passing like spectral shadows before the mind, hers is evolved. Silently, but clearly, it separates from the rest. The fruitful suggestions of the record, with our knowledge of the customs of the country and the age, bring her almost in presence to the eye.

* * * * * * *

Her father's name was Eliam — "the servant of God;" and she was "very beautiful to look upon." It requires then but slight effort of the imagination to see her, first, a blithe and beautiful maiden in the household of her father. It is a household in which the fear of God is a pervasive principle; in which the worship of God is a daily enjoyment. He who is its head, with the fresh and simple piety of

the primitive ages, sees God in all things. To him the wonderful theophanies of the past,—the pillar of cloud and fire that shed its brightness upon the Syrian sands, the manifested splendor of Deity upon the reeling top of Sinai, the fall of the walls of Jericho before the invisible Omnipotence that beleaguered them—are not legends or myths, but stupendous realities. To him it is the Lord that thunders in the heavens. The rain and sunshine come from God's hand. The earth is all, to him, a temple of the Highest; made wonderful and sacred by the presence of Jehovah.

Within this family Bathsheba has grown up. The influences of its peaceful and godly life have passed into her heart. The gay vivacity of early girlhood has deepened by degrees into maturity of emotion. An added and beautiful thoughtfulness begins to shed its light on her daily activities. As she bends over the eight-stringed harp—Sheminith; as she folds upon her head the luxuriant tresses of the East, in the fashion of the Hebrew maidens, or interweaves them with gold and gems, or binds them with the fillet; as she speeds the distaff with nimble hand, in spinning the cotton or linen threads that shall be wrought into clothing for the household, or weaves the tapestries for the couches, or silently embroiders with scarlet and golden threads the woven stuffs; as she decks herself with the raiment of brilliant white, or with the ornaments at that time appropriate to her sex—the bracelets and necklaces of gold, the embossed girdle, the pendants of pearl;—still are her thoughts upon the future, more than the present. The mantling flush, upon the cheek whose hue the sun has deepened and enriched, speaks of hope and fear striving together; of pure reserve, and maidenly sensibility. And as we hear through the latticed window her rich and swaying voice, she is singing the hymns of her nation, and its majestic psalms.

So, like the star that heralds the morning, in dewy freshness, in

calm and beaming beauty, arises before us the image of the beautiful daughter of Eliam — God's servant.

* * * * * * *

We meet her, next, at just that point where the record of the Scriptures concerning her distinctly commences; where her personal history, as disconnected from her father's, comes clearly into view. The marriage with Uriah has been accomplished. The solemn covenant has been made; the marriage-gifts have been exchanged; and she has been brought, with the attendant and rejoicing bands of youths and maidens, to her new home. The gallant Hittite, descended from the tribe originally possessed of Hebron and its vicinity, has gained for himself this maiden of Israel. A proselyte, doubtless, to the faith of her people; a man of rank and intelligence, and of tried prowess in war, he had stood almost thirty years before among the mighty men who were the reliance and strength of the youthful David. A generous, chivalrous, and self-sacrificing soldier, as his whole history shows him to have been, it is easy to perceive that the gentle and graceful Bathsheba is now the light of his home, and the chief jewel of his heart. Though younger than himself, probably by many years, her affections are fastening themselves around him like the vine around the tower. The retiring, half-timid reverence which is mingled with this affection, as the dark leaf of the honeysuckle with its brilliant and fragrant blossoms, is nowise inappropriate to the period and the sex. He is to her an honor and a defence; and "he is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders." And she, in turn — what is she unto him, that stalwart and hard-nerved soldier? In the touching and beautiful words with which Nathan described her — she is "the one little ewe lamb, which he has brought

up and nourished; which lies in his bosom, and is to him as a daughter." They are established at Jerusalem; not far, probably, from the royal palace.

And now commences that terrible succession of crimes, which stands in the history of David as a perpetual monitor against transgression; which furnished the occasion for the bursting outgush of humiliation and penitence in the fifty-first Psalm, and which was followed so swiftly and so long by the judgments of Jehovah. While his army is at a distance, besieging Rabbah, the river-encircled capital of the Ammonites, he is idling at home in luxurious ease. In the exercise of oriental sovereignty, and under the fearful systems of polygamy and concubinage, he has been long accustumed to gratify his passions, almost without restraint or limit. The fear of God has thus for the time lost all control over his purposes. His very conscience has become numbed, and blinded to the majesty of virtue. His soul, grown clotted by contagion, has lost not only

—— "the sweet peace that goodness bosoms ever,"

but almost

"The divine property of her first being."

As he walks thus at evening, upon the elevated floor surmounting the palace, he sees the beautiful bride of Uriah, as she issues from the bath; and his passion is roused into dominion and mastery. The demands of honor and of religion, of God and duty, are all forgotten; and with an exercise of that arbitrary authority to this day not uncommon among the despotic princes of the East —— "he sent messengers, and took her" to his own house.

The subsequent incidents in the melancholy history are too

familiar to need recital. Before the open and sensitive conscience, contemplating calmly the history of David, they stamp themselves on the record, like letters of phosphoric fire flashing in darkness. The noble Uriah, summoned suddenly from the camp that he might be made the unconscious concealer of the royal shame, was found too sensitive to the impulses of a delicate and chivalrous honor to suit the purposes of the guilty king. He was therefore miserably betrayed to be murdered, at the royal command. After his death, Bathsheba was taken openly to the house of David; and it was not till the prophet had fearlessly rebuked him, and the child that had been born to him was smitten unto death, that the king awoke to a consciousness of the accumulated and ineffaceable crimes which were to be to him thenceforth a crown of pain, and in the memory of which the sword was never to depart from his house. Then Bathsheba had become his wife; and she was afterwards the mother of several of his sons.

Through all these terrible scenes she stands before us, more sinned against than sinning. If we could fully transport ourselves, in thought, into the spirit and life of thirty centuries ago, we should probably feel more for her of compassion than of blame. We should find, if not that physical violence was used against her, yet that the awful majesty, the almost visible divinity, that to the Hebrew matron hedged round the king—his mighty power, and God-derived authority—the seeming sanctity that invested him, as one anointed by God himself, as one admitted so often into communion with Jehovah, as one enshrined before the nation in the guardianship of Providence—bore down her spirit into passive and dumb acquiescence; that the crime was his, and the endurance hers. The fact that all the weight of censure is cast on him, prompts this conclusion. There is nothing recorded or intimated of her previous history, which should lead us to doubt this. "She mourned for her husband," when she heard that

he was dead. She was received with honor into the family of the king. The training of Solomon, according to the Rabbins, was committed especially to her; and her name is recorded, among the four names of females, in the genealogy of the Saviour. We are warranted, therefore, in believing that she suffered wrong rather than did it; and that the purity of her character was not destroyed, by all the storm of passion which burst so furiously upon the current of her history.

As we think of her at its end, the freshness and blitheness of her youth have gone. Henceforth, there are dread memories in her heart, which nothing can efface, or deprive of their bitterness. The lines of sorrow are graven upon the face that was before so fair. Some silvery threads are mingling with the tresses that were so lustrously dark. The scarlet and purple robes have taken the place of the raiment that was spotlessly white. The more ornamented veil floats backward from the brow that has begun to be furrowed; and the sandals are richer, as the step is less elastic. But still can we joyfully follow her in our thoughts, through her daily avocations. She meditates more than formerly upon the sublime poetry of the Hebrews; upon the wonderful records of their inspired books; upon her own relations to God and to the Future. There is something now in her image of sorrow and of patience; something of pleading, even, as if for charity and sympathy, and for merciful consideration, that is exquisitely touching.

* * * * * *

Twice, again, does Bathsheba come to our view in the Scriptures. Once, it is on that memorable occasion when she went in to the king,

then far advanced in years, and obtained from him the recognition and the fulfilment of his promise, that Solomon her son should after his death reign in his stead. With an art, doubtless entirely unpremeditated by the narrator, but in the accomplishment of which there is a natural poetry outrunning the conceptions of genius, the two whose lives have been so tragically forced into one channel are vividly associated before us, for the last time, upon the eve of David's departure from life. Upon the issue of the interview, depends the earthly destiny of Bathsheba and her son. But with what dignity and intelligence she bears herself through it, with what calmness and self-possession, blended with a womanly tact and earnestness that insure success, who need be told?

When we see her again, it is in a single act, that beautifully illustrates her character and her relations to her son, and lets us in, as through an open window, upon the customs of the time. The gayety and repose of her early days, the stormy scenes of her young womanhood, have all passed by. After a life in parts vivid with piety, but in other parts darkened by gross sins, David has gone to meet before God the man whom he had murdered; the man whom, with a shrinking of heart that will be very suggestive to the thoughtful reader, he mentions *last* in his final recital of his mighty men. The son whom she rejoiced in after the death of her first-born, and whom it has been her pleasure and care to educate for the kingdom, has grown to manhood, and has taken the sceptre. His kingdom is established. He is probably beginning already to meditate the building of the Temple, and to give evidence of that singular wisdom and grace, which are to win so rapidly the hearts of his people. At just this point comes in Bathsheba. She comes upon an errand which indicates her kindness. And as she comes—— "the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be

set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand." She fails in her petition; for here, as so often elsewhere, the craft of policy is too much for the wisdom of kindness. But how beautiful is the scene thus opened to our view! So let her ever abide in our thoughts;—the honored and serene mother of Israel's wisest king; a noble calm, of gracious and gentle dignity, surrounding her presence; the visible deference of the young monarch, the noblest tribute to her reverend character and her maternal faithfulness; the benign wisdom of her look, contrasted, as the autumn with the spring, with the vivacity of her girlhood; the beaming face, the elevated form, the queenly carriage, still reminding us of her who in her woman's prime "was very beautiful to look upon."

Her life has now drawn nigh unto its setting. But a placid repose, as of the evening of the day, is entering her heart. And may we not believe that as she looks into the Future, although it is not to her resplendent as to us under the glory of Christ's Ascension, it is still radiant with God's promises, as with a thousand stars.

THE END.

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